

2021

Spiral



*The Art of
Awakening*

**THE
RUBIN**

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Yangdol Namgyal Bhutia is a tattoo artist, illustrator, and painter based in Sikkim, India. Her work incorporates traditional Tibetan art and the sacred techniques and philosophies behind thangka painting with modern mediums like tattooing and digital illustration. In her cover illustration for *Spiral*, she represented the Vairochana mandala as an opening to a higher understanding of emptiness and interdependence.

STEP INSIDE THE MANDALA

According to a popular search engine, last year the word meditation was searched in every country. No matter where they lived, people were looking inward to find comfort in a troubled world.

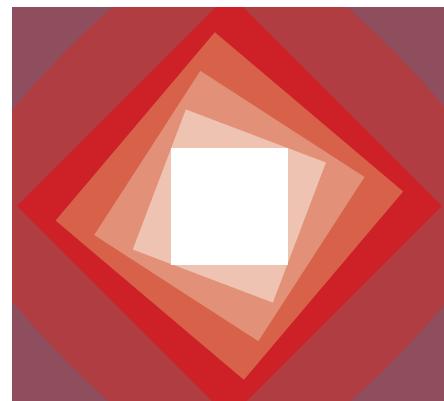
At the Rubin Museum of Art we ask, what can art do? More specifically, how can Tibetan Buddhist art, and the teachings reflected in it, provide solace amidst our struggles today? Exploring the relationship between art and a spiritual practice such as meditation as a tool for self-awareness and personal growth seems more important than ever.

This year in the pages of *Spiral* we focus on the theme of awakening through the eyes of artists, practitioners, and scientists. Artist Pema Namdol Thaye tells us about the process of creating three-dimensional mandalas, including a project to build the largest monument in Nepal. Lama Rod Owens writes on what he calls “contemporary wokeness,” and scientist Tracy A. Dennis-Tiwary shares how the brain supports our emotional

transformation. We’ll also learn how morning rituals can lead to a sense of real awakening, and, as part of a series of articles we’re calling “Step by Step,” you’ll have a chance to create your own ritual too.

In March, we open *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*, an exhibition that explores Tibetan Buddhism’s message of awareness and inner awakening. Developed by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the exhibition has been reimagined and adapted for the Rubin Museum’s galleries. Curators Jeffrey S. Durham and John Henry Rice write about the power of looking at, as well as into, the Himalayan Buddhist works of art and the relationship between art and self-discovery.

Later in the year, the Mandala Lab will debut and create a new visitor experience. We are transforming the third floor into a gallery-sized three-dimensional mandala that takes you on a self-guided journey rooted in Buddhist teachings. Drawing on the tools of social and emotional learning, the space is meant to further self-knowledge, inspire emotional transformation, and enrich our capacity for empathy and connections with others. In *Spiral*, we’ll go behind the scenes in the creation of the Mandala Lab and see how the Rubin Museum itself has the structure of a mandala in its DNA.



Our hope throughout the year in the Museum, online, and in *Spiral* is to empower us to face the challenges of our everyday world—to widen our imagination, understand our emotions, cultivate our empathy, and recognize our interconnectedness. In many ways, that has always been a part of the Rubin experience, one we hope helps us all do the necessary work of awakening.

Jorrit Britschgi
Executive Director
Rubin Museum of Art

Spiral

THE ART OF AWAKENING

2021

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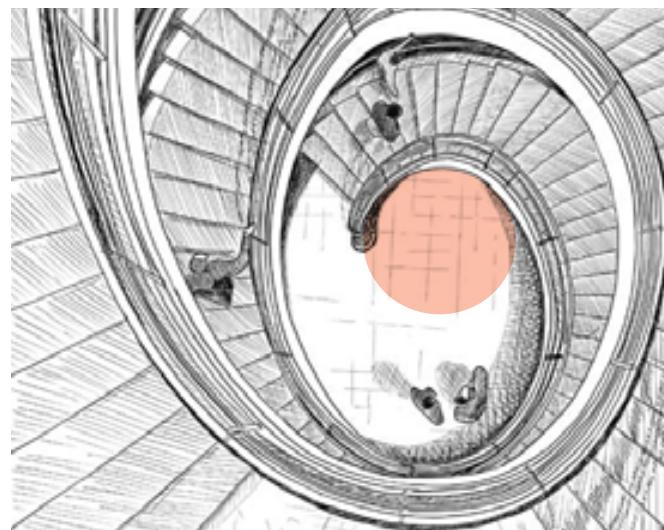
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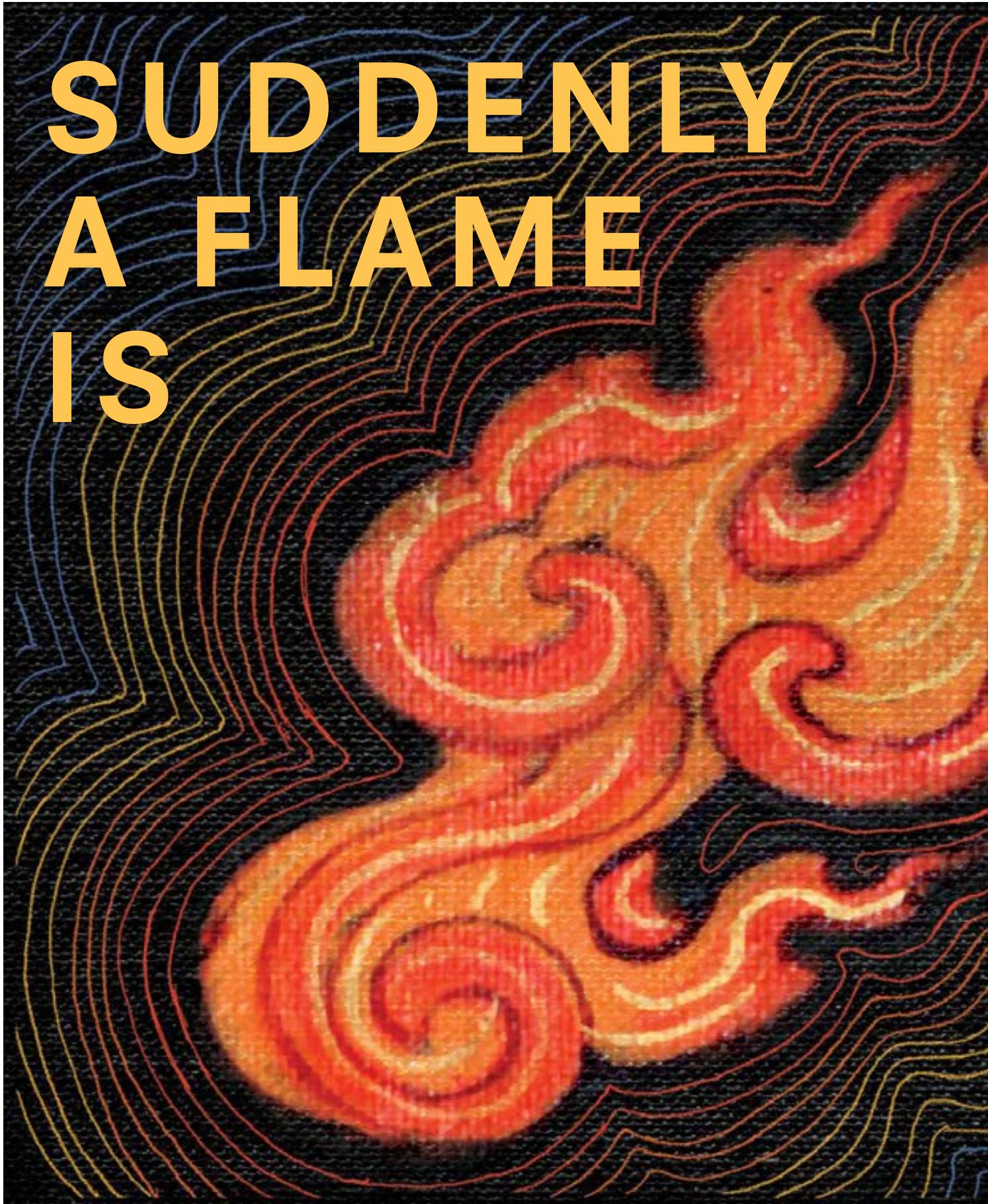
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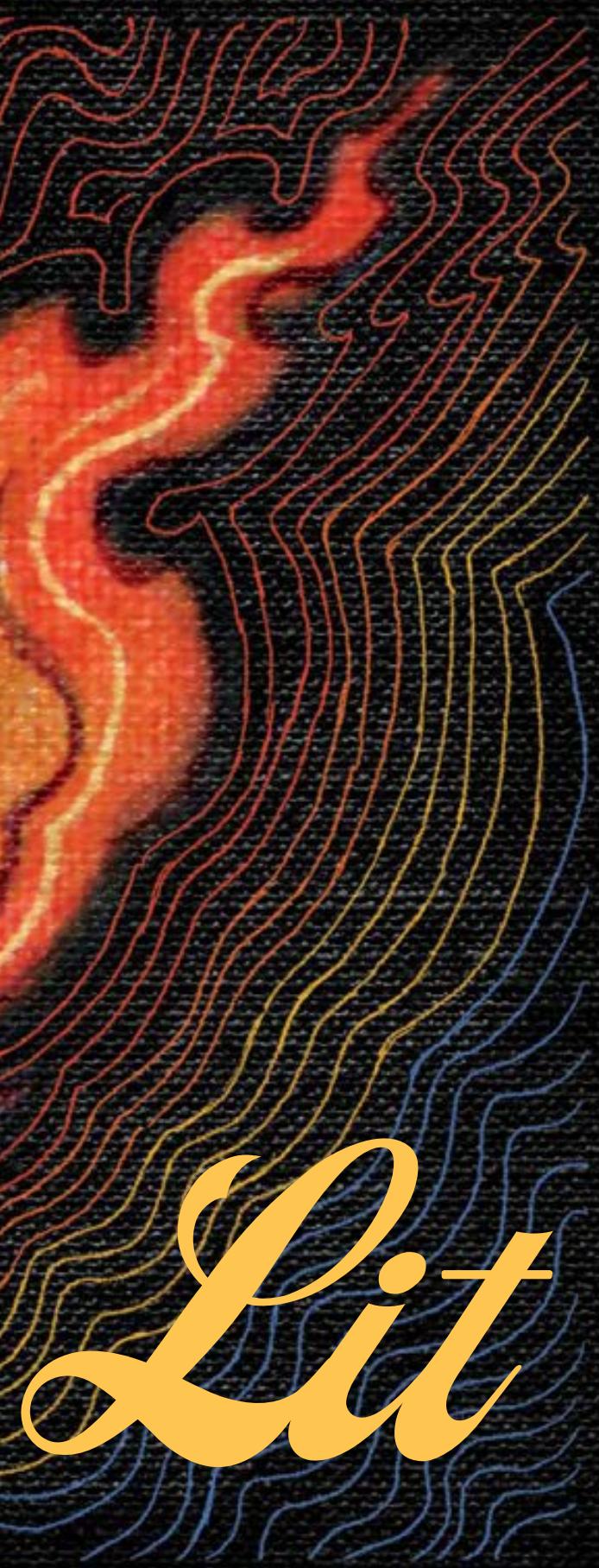
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SUDDENLY A FLAME IS





Expressing the nature of awakening

BY Judith Simmer-Brown

MYSTICAL TRADITIONS throughout the world place special emphasis on spiritual transformation through personal experience. From the *extasis* (rapture) of St. Teresa of Avila to the *tawhid* (oneness) of Rumi and the *bhakti* (divine love) of Shri Ramakrishna, direct experience of the ultimate is understood to engender a complete shift in understanding, clarity, and relationship with the world. But the nature of these experiences is notoriously difficult to express in words, and sacred sources employ elusive, often contradictory language to capture their qualities and contents. Some articulations emphasize the positive content, the *via positiva*, the *cataphatic* way, while others focus on the *via negativa*, the *apophatic*, articulating what this epiphany is not.



Buddha Shakyamuni;
Tibet; 14th century;
gilt copper alloy;
Rubin Museum of Art;
C2001.10.2 (HAR 65025)

The same can be said for the enlightenment or awakening of the Buddha. According to the legends, after extensive ascetic practices and a profound spiritual journey, the young prince Gautama sat on a soft seat under a lush tree on the banks of the Nairanjana River and vowed not to arise until he came to discover the way to liberation. In the weeks of his sitting, a powerful experience dawned. The experience could not be described in conventional words, yet the Buddha was committed to communicating his experience to others. He had a dilemma. If he described the experience positively, it could create clinging and fixation on the experience as something to be attained, undermining the journey. If he spoke negatively, this achievement could be taken nihilistically.

In one of his earliest discourses, the Buddha spoke of his experience negatively, describing it as *nirvana*, which literally means “extinction,” as in the image of the flame of suffering being snuffed out, signifying the quality of freedom of his experience. In parallel sources, he positively proclaimed himself to be a *Buddha*—“the Awakened One”—and later called his experience *sambodhi* or “Complete Awakening.” While the negative term *nirvana* may be more popular in Western parlance, historically it is more

common for the Buddha to be known positively as the Awakened One.

In Western religion “awakening” has been more often associated with a movement in eighteenth-century Protestantism that emphasized faith rather than reasoning and highlighted the crippling power of sin and the importance of divine grace. Such movements have continued in successive waves through the mid-twentieth century, countering the formalism and hierarchy of the church, and nurturing the development of evangelical fervor and charismatic spiritual experience.

Awakening has a somewhat different emphasis in Buddhism. My beloved Sanskrit professor used to say that the word root *budh* implied being in impenetrable darkness, with all the ragged emotions and misperceptions that can arise. Suddenly a flame is lit, and the darkness is illuminated, bringing clarity, expansiveness, and warmth. That is why the synonym “enlightenment” is

also used. In the legends it is said that after sitting in vigil at the foot of the tree through the three watches of the night, the Buddha spiritually awakened at the break of dawn.

Buddhism does not have a role for an external deity or god in the Western Abrahamic sense, and so the Buddha’s awakening is not associated with an encounter with a divine being. Instead, each being has a latent awakened nature, and the spiritual path is uncovering that nature—gradually or suddenly or some combination of the two—to realize that we all are inherently, naturally awake. While the Buddha’s world had gods and goddesses, they were minor players, subject to confusion, doubt, and even death. For Buddhism, the true ultimate is found only within one’s own experience through meditation.

Reflecting on the accounts of the Buddha’s awakening experience and its aftermath, it’s difficult to know exactly

Reflecting on the accounts of the Buddha’s awakening experience and its aftermath, it’s difficult to know exactly what he experienced.

what he experienced. Buddha was notoriously cautious about speaking of bliss; he felt that bliss states could lead us to oblivious dead ends, removing us from compassionate care for others. But when speaking of the awakening, he described it as supreme insight, liberation, certainty, lucidity, and knowledge and vision.

The classical accounts speak of three elements in the Buddha's awakening. The first was the wisdom dimension, a detailed life review of the karmic knots of suffering—his own and those of others—and nonconceptual discovery of the method to undo them. Then he had an extended experience lasting seven weeks of the bliss of freedom, the meditative aspect. Finally, he accepted the request that he teach others what he had discovered, the compassion aspect. It is often said that the Buddha's enlightenment was not completed until he responded to the supplication of the king of the gods to share his wisdom with others. This was understood as wisdom that completes itself with commitment to compassionate engagement.

Traditional accounts say that the Buddha went in search of five of his companions on the spiritual journey to share the news of his awakening. He found them near modern-day Varanasi, India, in Deer Park, a peaceful grove of verdant trees and flowers. As he approached, the five seekers were amazed, stunned by his radiant appearance, his noble carriage, his confidence and magnetism. In spite of their hesitations, they found themselves spontaneously arising respectfully. One stepped forward to take his robe and begging bowl, another brought a seat, and another brought water to bathe his feet. Together they greeted him warmly, welcoming him, and reverently asked about the radiant glow of his complexion, his serene demeanor, the certainty in his eyes. For the first time, he publicly proclaimed he was now Awakened, the Buddha, completely beyond fear and torment. If only they would receive his guidance, they also could become free. Under a moonlit night they sat together in the hermitage grove, and the Awakened One launched his cycles of teaching.

Reading these accounts, it is easy to see how painting and sculpture have supported the way the Buddha's awakening is understood in the tradition. Over the centuries, images of the Buddha have depicted his glowing human form, his serenity with a beatific smile, his steady strength and gentleness, and the glow of inner illumination. These representations, along with the rich lore that has accompanied them, convey the nonconceptual embodied qualities of his awakening—lucid wisdom, joyful meditation, and radiating compassion.

Judith Simmer-Brown is Distinguished Professor of Contemplative and Religious Studies at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, and an Acharya (senior dharma teacher) in the Shambhala lineage of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. She is author of *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*.



STEP BY STEP

Breathe with Joy

by Pilin Anice

Awaken the body and quiet the mind with Breath of Joy, a balancing pranayama, or breathing, practice coupled with synchronized upper body movements. It temporarily stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, increasing oxygen levels in the bloodstream while activating the parasympathetic nervous system, creating a calm, focused mind.

STEP 1

Stand with your feet parallel shoulder-width apart, with soft knees.

STEP 2

Inhale through the nose one-third of your lung capacity and swing your arms up in front of your body parallel in line with your shoulders.

STEP 3

Continue inhaling to two-thirds capacity and stretch your arms out to the side like wings to shoulder level.

STEP 4

Inhale to full capacity and swing your arms parallel and over your head, palms facing each other.

STEP 5

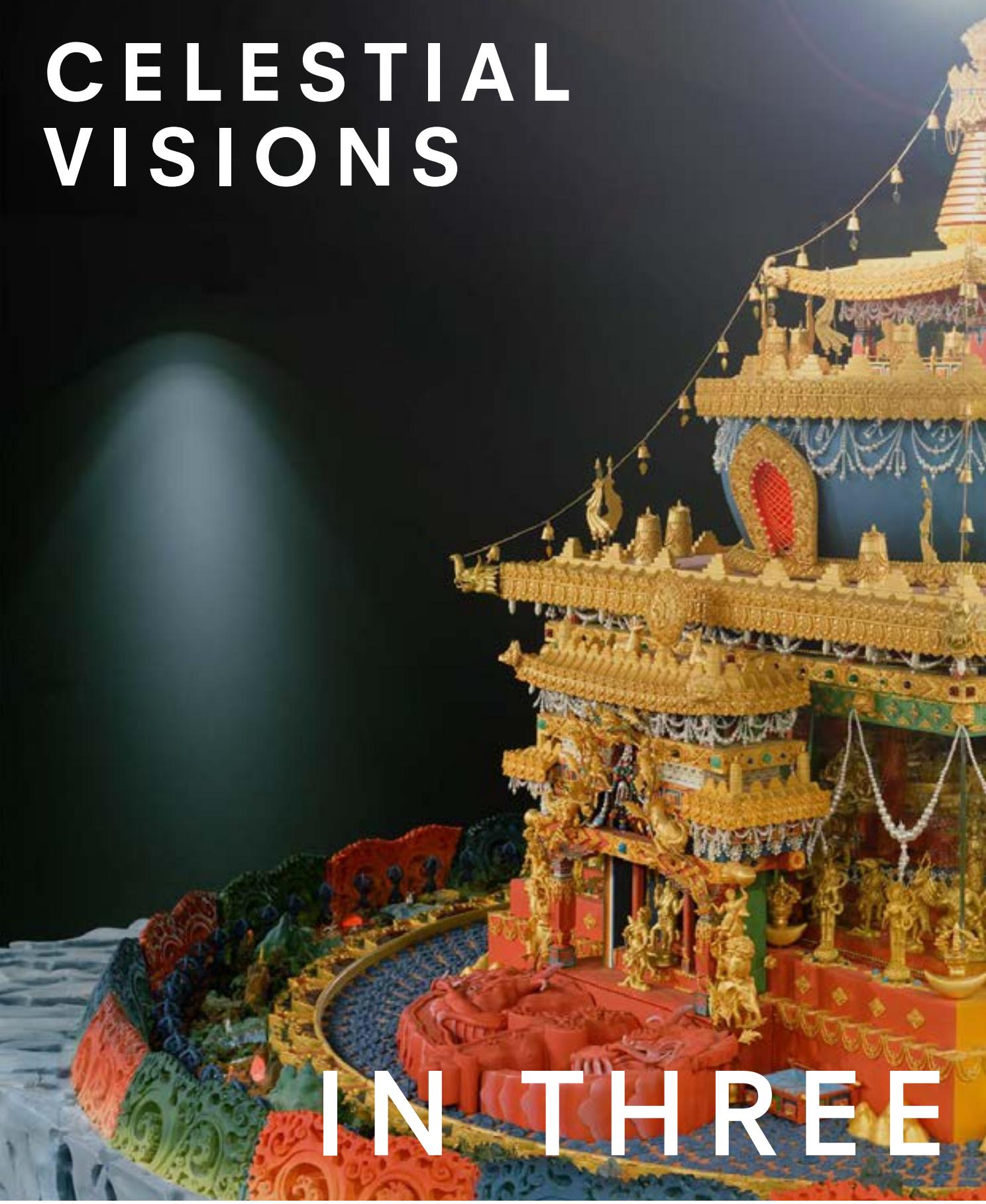
Open your mouth and exhale completely with a HA, bending the knees deeply as you fold forward and swing your arms back behind you.

Start slow and find a rhythm that works for you without forcing or straining your body. Complete five to eight repetitions. Find stillness, close your eyes, and notice the sensations and aliveness from within.

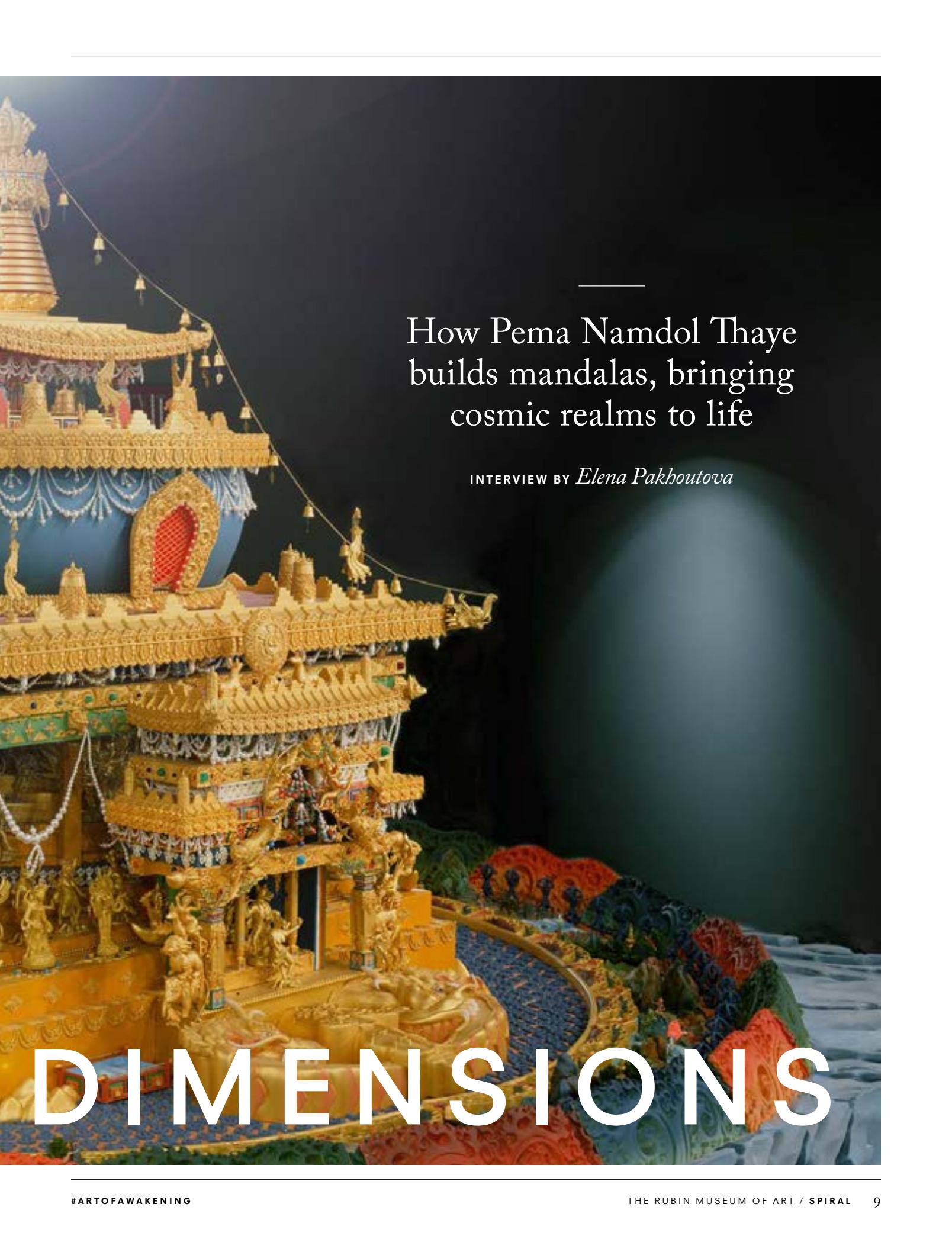
Contraindications: If you start to feel lightheaded, stop for a minute and breathe normally. Don't practice if you have high blood pressure or any kind of head or eye injury, like migraines or glaucoma.

Pilin Anice, E-RYT 500, is a dance, meditation, and Kripalu-trained yoga instructor, wellness coach, and model. Known for infusing joy and connection in her classes, she has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*, and BET/CentricTV. A Howard alumna, she is an instructor at the Ailey Extension in New York City and has been featured in the *New York Times*, *ESSENCE*, *MindBodyGreen*, and *SELF*. www.pilinanice.com

CELESTIAL VISIONS



IN THREE



How Pema Namdol Thaye
builds mandalas, bringing
cosmic realms to life

INTERVIEW BY *Elena Pakhoutova*

DIMENSIONS

PEMA NAMDOL THAYE IS AN ARTIST who makes divine structures come to life. Some of us may recognize mandalas as floorplan-like diagrams, usually rendered in paint or colored sand, which represent cosmic realms of deities. What we rarely get to see are mandalas as magnificent architectural forms of manifested heavenly palaces. Pema Namdol creates such celestial edifices. He is an accomplished traditionally trained artist of thangka painting who also perfected the exceptional art of 3D mandala making. The Rubin Museum has shown two of his mandalas in past exhibitions. Here Pema Namdol discusses his latest work and the process of bringing the rich symbolic meaning of the mandala into full view in multiple dimensions.

Elena Pakhoutova: How did you come to making 3D mandalas?

Pema Namdol Thaye: Art was in our family, and my teacher is my uncle, Lama Gonpo Tenzing Rinpoche. He learned this art of making 3D mandalas in Tibet. Living with my uncle growing up, I was always exposed to art, and from a very early age I was crystal clear that art was my life's purpose. I had very little interest in anything besides art. It is beyond any doubt that it was my karma to be born in that family.

Why is the tradition of 3D mandala making so rare?

It is very rare because of the amount of time it takes to create each mandala, and it requires so many different master artists to put it together. Traditionally in Tibet, first the 3D artist has to create the 2D line drawing. Then the artist has to conceptualize everything into the 3D format, after which he works with master wood, clay, and metal carvers to build it. Finally, the artist works with painters knowledgeable about traditional architectural decorative motifs. To build a 3D mandala in the twenty-first century is rare because the tradition is almost entirely extinct. In my case, I am fortunate to have the multidisciplinary training necessary to be able to create all aspects of a 3D mandala. It is my sincere aspiration to see the 3D mandala tradition revived in my lifetime.

How do you begin when making a 3D mandala?

First you have to study a wide variety of texts of the deity whose mandala you wish to create. Then you have to visualize the deity. You have to study and meditate on the characteristics of the deity and the deity's retinue, which will give you a good insight into what you are about to create. You have to be able to see the entire premeditated mandala, the cosmogram of the deity. After that,

I wouldn't say it's easy, but now you're just bringing the celestial vision into life, as material compound. It's in your mind, and now you have to make it solid.

Are there special tips in the texts? Like manuals on how to make the mandala?

There's no mandala manual text like that. You have to go to a particular deity's sadhana, and then in the sadhana it will describe the mandala. But not all texts have detailed instructions. Some



Zangdok Palri Mandala
by Pema Namdol Thaye





There is so much to study in the mandala. . . . When people study more and more, they find the true answer of what or who they are.

have more instructions than others. In terms of Zangdok Palri (Copper-Colored Mountain Palace), there is no one text that describes all aspects of it. There are enlightened beings who traveled there. They had visions, they astral traveled, they had dreams. Each came back with different information. So you have to read over thirty different texts and then mentally weave the information together in order to create the visual imagery of the mandala's form.

Do you also look at other painted or sculptural examples of those mandalas?

When I was younger I never had the chance of looking at many old paintings from the masters. Now because of the internet and museum collections worldwide, one can see so much more. But in regard to 3D mandalas, there's not so much that you can actually look at—3D mandala images are rare to find. I think one powerful thing is because I

didn't have those images when I was a young artist I had to look deeper to study the texts and the meaning and try to get the answer from the source, from blessings from the deity or the guru. I've had so many dreams of mandalas. Even now I'm using my dream source to make some of my design pattern on the mandalas.

How has working with architects helped you advance your knowledge and skill in making 3D mandalas?

Using western architectural tools that I learned at the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture has made it easier to translate 3D mandala designs into modern blueprints. This helps the building process in terms of speed and accuracy. Initially though, I learned to draw blueprints by hand with a pencil. Now I create all the blueprints on a computer with AutoCAD. It's so precise, down to a hairline, so there is no limit to how much detail I can create. Historically,

in the tradition of Tibetan art, it is a big shift. In a way I think it tells a story. Didn't Buddha say that the expression of dharma will change with time? I'm not changing the essence or celestial dimensions of 3D mandalas, because these are sacred, timeless, spiritual abodes, but I am changing how I make them by using modern tools.

What is the most challenging part of making 3D mandalas?

I find it quite challenging making the entrances and then joining them to the main internal structure. I find that the entrance is a mandala on its own, because so much detail goes into it. The other challenging part is that sometimes you have to visualize that you're inside the mandala. You're looking out. And when you look out, what do you see? For instance, in the text, it says you gaze through the skylight of the sun and moon. Now where is that? You have to find that. That's not for me to translate. It's celestial. Only the deities would know that.

What are your goals in creating a 3D mandala?

My goals are vast. I find that more than anything else showing 3D mandalas helps explain to people the deity phenomena and the spiritual world. People have seen thangka paintings, statues, and religious artifacts. But they haven't seen 3D mandalas. Everyone who sees



Detail of Zhitro Mandala by Pema Namdol Thaye



a 3D mandala gets tapped into it. Deities don't need to live anywhere. It is we who haven't unlocked that secret. Deities display 3D mandalas to unfold the secret in human beings. There is so much to study in the mandala, so much to look at. When people study more and more, they find the true answer of what or who they are.

Also in the text it says *thongdrol*—it means liberation through seeing. As soon as you see the mandala, you get liberated. That's how powerful it is. Then when people see the mandala they say, "How come I'm not liberated?" I tell them that you are liberated. You don't know because of your intense karma. You don't see the effect, but the seed has already been planted. You've been blessed, and it's going to unfold in the years to come. It's the seed of liberation.

What mandalas are you working on right now?

I'm working on creating two life-size mandalas. One is in Nepal, which is a Zangdok Palri mandala temple. I was invited to design and build that by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche Sangye Pema Shepa. The previous Dudjom Rinpoche's main mission was to build Zangdok Palri, and

he built one in India when he fled from Tibet. The person who helped build and design that temple was my uncle, Lama Gonpo. So I learned from my teacher, and now I'm building the present one. I was also raised a few meters from that Zangdok Palri in India. As a child, I saw that structure built from the foundation to the top. It's karma, as I previously mentioned.

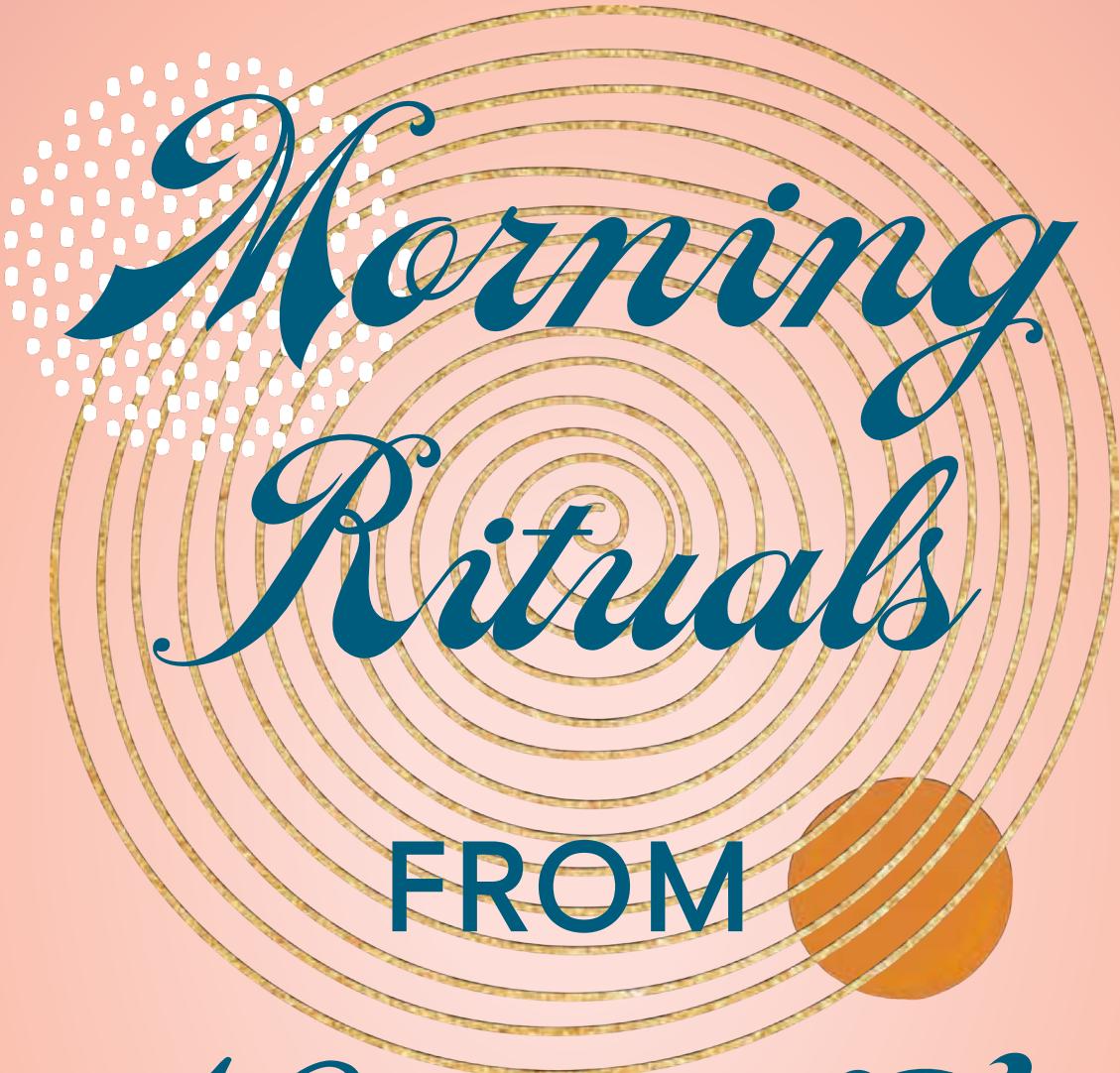
The other mandala temple that I'm working on is a Zhitro mandala temple in Sikkim, India, for His Eminence Rigzin Dorjee Rinpoche. Inside will be the hundred buddhas, the bardo deities, from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The idea is that you can walk inside the main mandala and look at each life-size deity. Same thing with Zangdok Palri—you can walk inside and see all the deities. It's never been done before. You will experience the distinct vibration of the mandala as a whole, almost as if you are inside the womb of the deity.

What does awakening mean to you?

Awakening for me is awakening from all the poisons. In Buddhism we have the three main poisons: ignorance, desire, and hatred. You can understand it, but to really know it and experience it is a totally different ballgame. Intellectually we know, but we have to take that dualistic knowledge to the wisdom level. Then when hatred is actually happening, wisdom steps in. But it's hard. It's a lifelong practice. We have to transform a little at a time by using all kinds of tools. For example, compassion. You become part of the phenomenon. Who can touch phenomenon? No one. Nothing but deeper awakening. You can't teach that. You can't buy that. That's what awakening is for me. ☺

Pema Namdol Thaye is a painter, sculptor, 3D mandala specialist, traditional Tibetan architect, author, and art educator. An artist of Tibetan-Bhutanese heritage who studied in Kalimpong, India, he has won international acclaim as a master of traditional Himalayan arts. He was awarded permanent residency in the United States in 2008. In the same year he founded Padma Studios in Los Angeles.

Elena Pakhoutova is a curator of Himalayan art at the Rubin Museum of Art and holds a PhD in Asian art history from the University of Virginia. She has curated several exhibitions at the Rubin, most recently *The Second Buddha: Master of Time* (2018) and *The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel* (2019).



*Morning
Rituals*
FROM
Near AND Far

From the Himalayan mountains to the New York City streets, people share how they wake up every day



THE CALL OF THE TIBETAN BREAD SELLER

BY *Tenzin Chemey*

When my phone alarm rings to the tune of “Early Riser” at 6:30 a.m. on weekdays, my room is already filled with the sound of the giant prayer wheel being swung at full speed at Nechung Monastery, located right below the building where I live in Dharamshala. I say my prayers in respect to the Twenty-One Taras. Putting on my wool socks with Tibetan designs knitted by my mother, I take Anna Burns’s novel *Milkman* out on the small balcony for some fresh air blowing from the Dhauladhar Mountain range.

At 7:30 a.m., I wake my daughter. As she recites her multiplication table and Tibetan grammar text, I make butter tea to mix with tsampa, for that is the traditional food Tibetans eat on Wednesdays, the soul day of the Dalai Lama. Observing the day is a way to express devotion to the Dalai Lama and symbolically unite all Tibetans. On other days, I make a thin round bread called bakleb, which my daughter loves to eat with Nutella. In an hour, I am ready to take the ten-minute walk to my office dressed in a chupa, a gown worn by Tibetan women.

A couple parts of my morning routine change on weekends—my phone alarm sleeps and breakfast sometimes turns into a brunch. But one thing never changes, not even on weekends. I always half-awake to the loud call of a young Tibetan bread seller who walks in the street below, calling out for anyone who wants to buy his bread. His announcement comes before my phone alarm goes off.

On the threshold of consciousness in my half-awake state, I count how many items he is selling. Today he has four: white bread, a deep-fried bread called numtrag bagleb, doughnuts, and fried cookies called khabsey. My admiration for all hard-working people grows as I hear him, making my first feeling of the day one of inspiration. ☺

Tenzin Chemey is a second-generation Tibetan woman born in exile in India. Her love of writing, particularly poetry, is inspired by her childhood in a Tibetan settlement camp and higher education in India and the United States. She currently lives in Dharamshala, a small town in northern India, where she works as the content producer of Tibet TV.



WALK THERAPY

BY *Meera Nair*

I found my new morning routine at the height of the pandemic, when the sirens wailing day and night wouldn't let me forget that I was in the epicenter and people were dying just yards away from me at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, New York.

Eight months later I am still walking, heading out early every morning to 34th Avenue, the open, car-free street in the heart of Jackson Heights. There's a gladness to the routine—waking up, lacing on shoes, putting the leash on the dog, getting the body in motion.

There is joy in turning the corner to find my friend waiting.

To walk every morning is to reclaim space and time, and those three miles help me shape my day and make it mine, before it disappears into a blur of work and anxiety about the virus.

We walk and I try to empty my mind into the moment; here then are my feet on the ground, here then are my fingers holding the leash, here is the breeze on my face and the sun in my hair, here are my ears listening to the birds in the trees above.

Here I am still, alive, breathing, alive. ●

Meera Nair is the author of *Video* and two middle-grade children's books. *Video* received the Sixth Annual Asian American Literary Award and was named a Best Book of the Year by the *Washington Post*. Nair's work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, NPR's *Selected Shorts*, and *Guernica*, among other publications. She teaches creative writing at New York University and co-founded the reading series #QueensWritersResist.

#OpenStreet on 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights; photograph by Ron Dunn



A CUP OF BOILED WATER

BY *Tsewang Chuskit*

Ten days ago, I returned to my hometown of Ladakh, where I am living with my aunt and cousins while taking my Naropa Fellowship classes online. We sleep in the same room, as Ladakh is too cold to sleep in different places. My aunt wakes up around 6:00 a.m., and her murmured prayers while she makes her bed also wake me. One needs extra strength to wake up to no heat. I stay in bed until she heats the bogar, the local heater, in the kitchen. She pours me a cup of boiled water and leaves it on the table.

While I drink my hot water, my aunt reads her prayer books, inspiring me to say a prayer when I go outside to use the bathroom and breathe some fresh air. In the United States, I am not a morning person, but Ladakh's fresh air and my aunt's prayers make me love mornings here. We wake my cousins when the sun rises and make them wash their hands. I usually help my youngest cousin with English and Hindi readings. It is a routine in most households for children to read aloud each morning; I used to do the same when I was small. While helping my cousin pronounce her words, my aunt and I make chapatis for breakfast. She rolls the dough, and I make the chapati on the stove. We all sit around the local heater and have breakfast and tea, until 10:00 a.m. when my Zoom classes begin. ●

Tsewang Chuskit recently graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts with a degree in education. She completed a summer internship with Silk Road Spaceship, a women's dyeing and sewing enterprise, and learned about how companies create opportunities for women to be financially independent. Chuskit is currently doing a Naropa Fellowship in Social Entrepreneurship.

The face mask in the photograph is from SilksRoadSpaceship.com.

A TIME FOR FAMILY

BY *Tsewang Chozom*

For me mornings are the most auspicious time of day. They begin in the family prayer room in our home in Kathmandu. Having watched and learned from my parents since childhood, I offer water in the seven bowls to our deities, light incense and a butter lamp, and do my thirty daily prostrations. Soon my mother-in-law, husband, and two teenage children join me in chanting mantras followed by pranayama, breathing yoga. We dedicate these prayers and offerings to all sentient beings, especially for the vulnerable during this pandemic. This ritual has been in the family for generations, and I feel blessed to continue it.

I then prepare breakfast, which can be tsampa (roasted barley), leftover noodles from dinner, or roti with masala omelet, along with butter tea. Because of the pandemic, these days we enjoy every meal together and spend them talking about the children's online classes and current events.

After breakfast, I walk five minutes to Wind Horse Gallery, where I go through the mail and social media, and if fortunate, meet up with an artist. Last Saturday I had a wonderful conversation with Hyolmo Pasang la, a thangka painter with twenty-five years of experience. Over sweet tea, I showed him images I had just received of his art hanging in a collector's home. I love looking at art, but for me every minute with an artist is especially precious and magical. ●

Tsewang Chozom is a mother of two, homemaker, and gallerist in Kathmandu. She is a co-founder of Wind Horse Gallery, a space that supports Himalayan artists. She enjoys conversations with artists who come from the far remote valleys and mountains of the Himalayas. You can follow many of these artists on Instagram @windhorse.gallery.

Tsewang Chozom with artist Hyolmo Pasang, October 2020; photograph by Tsedo Lama



FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL BEINGS

BY *Lopon Pema Wangdak*

As an ordinary Bhutanese Buddhist monk, my day starts with morning prayers at the shrine, including meditation and offerings of water, incense, flowers, and food. Every house in Bhutan has at least a simple shrine for their prayers. The morning prayer takes around thirty minutes to one hour. As a Buddhist practitioner one is always encouraged to pray not only for oneself but also for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Breakfast starts after the morning prayers and includes butter tea and rice with ema-datse, a chili curry with cheese.

Recently I went on a pilgrimage to Guru Rinpoche's sacred places across Bhutan. The virgin mountains, lush green forest, perfect weather, and fresh air made for a soothing journey. Our group of five drove, hiked, pitched tents, cooked, prayed, hoisted prayer flags, chanted mantras, and made offering for the well-being of all sentient beings and to overcome the pandemic, especially at this time. The morning prayers and mantra chanting are the same whether we are at the monastery or on pilgrimage. But starting the day at these sacred places with their natural ambiance makes it easy to connect with the spiritual energy. Unlike at the monastery, we are able to feel the connection between the great masters and their sacred places. Sometimes our morning routine included invitations from relatives to recite prayers and perform rituals in their homes.

In a nutshell, a monk's morning ritual is always to practice for the benefit of all beings. ●

Lopon Pema Wangdak is an ordained Buddhist monk and teacher at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute at Bylakuppe in Mysore, India. Born in Bhutan in 1985, he chose a monastic life at age twenty-one, enrolling in Namdroling Monastery, where he learned Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and practices for nine years. He has twice participated in the Gross National Happiness Youth Leadership Program in Bhutan, as well as a cultural exchange program in Worcester State University.

SACRED TIME

BY *Luna Ranjit*

Mornings are my sacred time. I try to protect it from the encroachment of social media feeds, nonstop news cycles, and life obligations. I keep my bedroom screen-free so that I can wake up mindfully without the siren calls of the blue bird—a practice I established to carve out some respite in my hectic schedule when I was a nonprofit director that has stayed with me. Real birds chirp outside my fourth-floor apartment window in Jackson Heights, Queens, as the neighborhood slowly stirs awake.

As soon as I step out of my sanctuary, however, I check my phone. I make sure there is no overnight urgent message from my almost eighty-year-old mother who lives alone in Kathmandu. This is a reality of immigrant life, living far away from loved ones.

On most days, right after breakfast, I sip my morning chya, milk no sugar, and video chat with my mother—she is winding down her day as I am starting mine—and feel grateful for the tools that help us transcend the distance and for her moxie to tackle new technology well into her seventies.

I then open my laptop to a deluge of emails and to-do lists, and the day goes by in a blink. ●

Luna Ranjit writes essays and poems. Her writing is inspired by her experience organizing for the rights of people on the margins in the United States and South Asia. She is a co-founder of Adhikaar, an organization building the power of new immigrants, and the New York Healthy Nail Salons Coalition. Find her on twitter @LunaRanjit and at lunaranjit.medium.com.



ELEVATED CARE

BY *Tsering Sangmo*

At an elevation of 4,600 feet, Kathmandu is cold in autumn mornings. These days I am helping a seventy-eight-year-old Tibetan granny who had a hip replacement a few months ago. We sleep in the same room in two single beds. Granny wakes before me, because she goes to sleep earlier in the night. Once she wakes she does her hip exercises and daily prayers.

I wake up around 5:00 a.m., wash my face, brush my teeth, drink warm water, and do my readings. At 6:00 a.m., I give granny her medicine and make her barley porridge. As she eats the porridge, I make our breakfast: four boiled eggs, four tortillas, and two cups of milk tea. While I cook I do my prayers, which I can recite from memory. We eat breakfast, then granny slowly gets out of her cozy bed while I do the dishes. I fold granny's blankets and make her bed, while granny washes her face. I follow granny into the prayer room and help with her water and lamp offerings. While granny does her prayers, I do three prostrations and prepare to leave. At 8:30 a.m. I walk ten minutes to my apartment to attend classes online and study. I'll return to granny's that evening, and the routine goes on. ●



Tsering Sangmo is a student at Sowa Rigpa International College, studying the science of traditional Himalayan and Tibetan medicine. She is from the hidden valley in the Himalayan region of Dolpo in western Nepal and currently lives in Kathmandu. Read more about her life and studies at tsesangsorignews.wordpress.com.

TURNING THE WHEELS

BY *Eshay Tobgyal*

Except for a few months in the summer, the weather in Ladakh is mostly cold and dry, so getting out of my warm, cozy bed is difficult. It's mostly sunny throughout the year, with a clear, blue, cloudless sky. My room faces the southeast, so every morning I wake up with sunshine gleaming into my room and a majestic view of the Stok Kangri Mountain range. The sight of the beautiful mountains starts my day on an inspiring note. Sometimes I have a traditional breakfast of butter tea, local bread called khambir, and dried meat. Other times it's bread and eggs with milk or tea.

The mountain biking scene has been picking up in Leh, so almost every morning I go mountain biking with a small group of riders. There are some beautiful down-hill sections near my home. The terrain and the slope are perfect for a downhill freeride, although the climb is ten times more difficult. After the ride we stop at a local tea shop where we have Indian masala tea and samosas.

Mountain biking has become an intrinsic part of my life during the pandemic. Starting my day on this note not only fills me with gratitude for being born in Ladakh but also motivates me to give back to my community and land.

Eshay Tobgyal is a resident of Leh, Ladakh, and a graduate of Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University. After working for KPMG and OYO, he returned to his hometown and started the first backpacker hostel called Raybo. He is now venturing into the field of agriculture. Tobgyal is passionate about Tibetan art and mountain biking, and he is a part of a local football (soccer) club.



STEP BY STEP

Create a Morning Ritual

by *Tiu de Haan*

A morning ritual allows us to create and then cross a threshold, where we may garner the gifts of our rest and set an intention for what lies ahead. Without a morning ritual, we risk finding ourselves shoved abruptly into our day, with the shout of the morning alarm in our ears and the glare of the newsfeed before our still bleary eyes. A ritual helps us to soften that transition, to bridge the hazy land of dream and the sharp world of wakefulness.

STEP 1: EMERGING

As you wake, there is a window. You're still half-dreaming. Your logic hasn't yet kicked in. Make the most of this fleeting spaciousness by simply welcoming your breath, eyes closed, for the first minutes after you wake. Let your dreams surface and release. Let your awareness come back into your body. And, with your eyes still closed, welcome the day that is now beginning, just as you release the night that is now coming to an end.

Note: Ideally, replace your phone with a physical alarm clock and postpone the intrusion of screens.

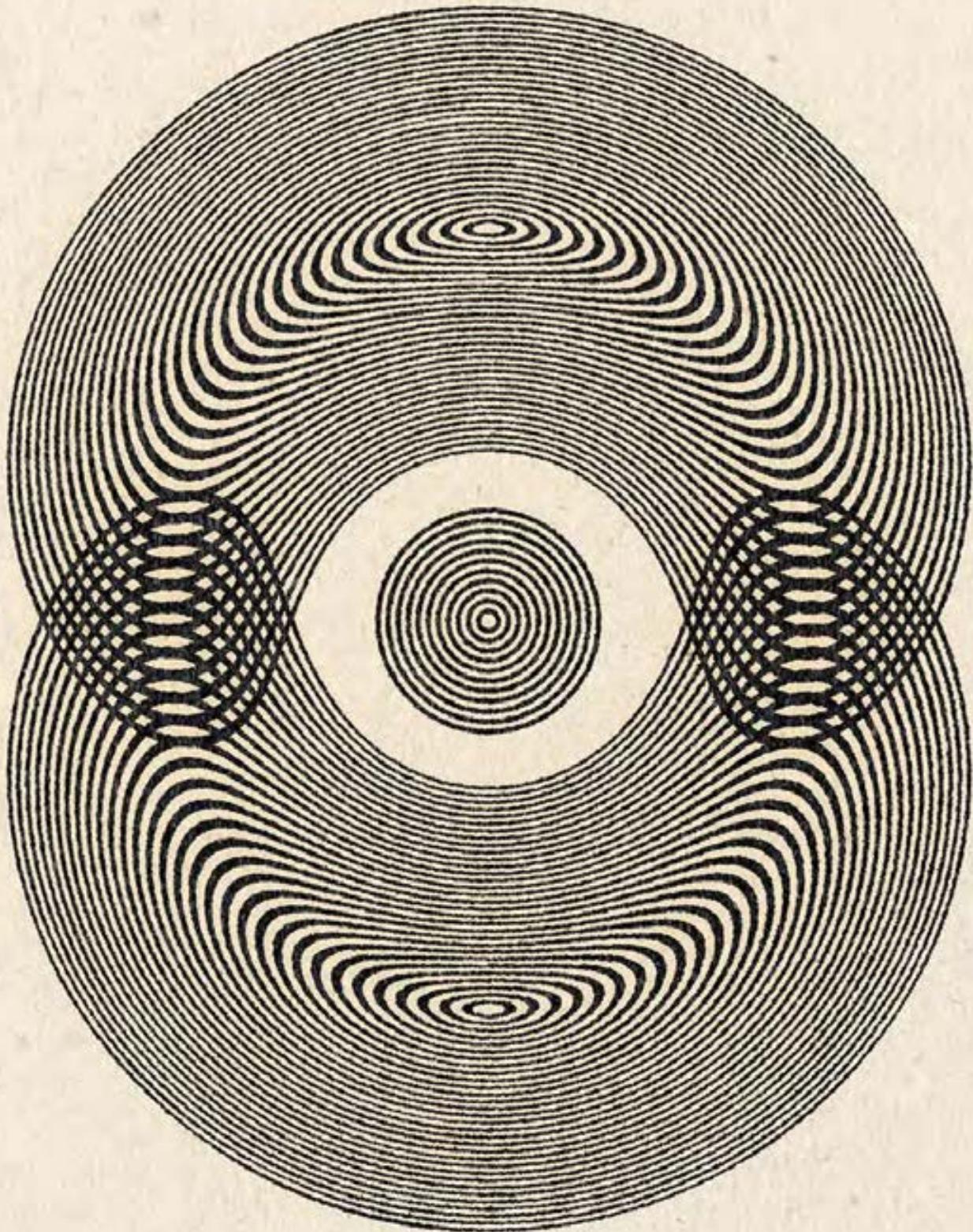
STEP 2: CLEANSING

In the shower, let the water carry with it any thoughts or words that no longer serve you, washing them away down the drain. Imagine the water as light, rinsing you clear, inside and out.

STEP 3: CREATING

Scan ahead to a particular moment in the day. Imagine yourself in that future present. See yourself with eyes shining, mind engaged, heart open, and body relaxed. Energize the moment, whether you expect it to be a challenge or a pleasure, or anything in between. Whatever it may contain, imagine it to be blessed. And then, simply go with gratitude into your day, centered, curious, and calm.

Tiu de Haan is an Oxford-educated ritual designer, creative facilitator, inspirational speaker, broadcaster, and musician. As a ritual designer, she creates bespoke ceremonies to honor the thresholds in our lives. Her TEDx talk "Why We Still Need Ritual" has over twenty thousand views, and she has been a keynote speaker at Google, Sunday Assembly, and the UN International Day of Happiness. www.tiudehaan.com



ARE YOU WOKE?



The work of wokeness is not what you think

BY *Lama Rod Owens*

SO MANY PEOPLE ARE WOKE these days. Not only does being woke feel like trying to be the coolest kid on the block, getting woke also feels like some kind of competition we are desperate to win, because the losers get blamed for all the bad shit in the world. There is a desperation to get woke or else. We move around in our circles gauging the wokeness of the people around us, and I can't help but feel that this inquiry is a kind of elitist performance attempting to establish yet another hierarchy within an experience that is supposed to be inherently anti-hierarchical and inclusive. Wokeness these days seems more like a performance meant to hide the performer's deep terror of anyone realizing that they are as full of pain as everyone else.

When I think about contemporary wokeness, I reflect on what I call social media gurus and self-help experts who craft glitzy personas and offer simple wisdom with little depth. Contemporary wokeness is basically a New Age feel-good cult mentality steeped in neoliberalism and expressing the traits of performativity (or the pursuit of the cool and hip), reductionism (oversimplification), and a lack of accountability (folks do and say whatever they want)—all stuffed into a machine of over commodification.

I do not consider myself woke. Considering how we define wokeness these days, I fear that I am not cool enough or pretty enough, or that I don't wear the right clothes or have enough pseudo-spiritual catchphrases or social media followers.

I am not a woke person in the same way that I do not consider myself a good person, because any positive place we claim to occupy as a static identity location makes it hard to notice the times when we are not so good. What I mean

to say is that being woke doesn't mean we somehow permanently transcend being harmful.

My understanding of wokeness began in my early teen years when I was developing an intense interest in justice. This interest was awakened and fueled by my growing awareness of the suffering I was experiencing as a Black queer boy in the South. Even as a young person, I was already tired of suffering, and I wasn't looking forward to a life of this suffering.

When I talk about wokeness, I am talking about our capacity to realize that our personal brokenheartedness is the same brokenheartedness that all beings are experiencing on some level at the same time. The heart of wokeness is the practice of empathy. It is awakened when we want to free ourselves and others from suffering. In other words, my understanding of wokeness is compassion.

Thus wokeness is not a feeling, a thought, or something that we claim and perform. Wokeness is an experience of being right here in this moment, experiencing our joy as well as our sorrow, all while knowing that everyone around us is having the same experience whether they are aware of it or not.

Wokeness is not a conversation about having the privilege of being woke. It's not about you being special or not. The conversation is about whether you are ready to get free or not, because freedom isn't a willy-nilly shot in the dark launched with no intention or out of boredom. It is an intentional aspiration that will cause you everything while simultaneously rendering you everything. There are two key questions: What do you want? And are you ready to do the work to get what you want? We must be willing to do this work not as an Instagram story

or tweet thread to publicly demonstrate the work. The work is often done in private in ways that are hard to articulate to others. Yet what we show to people is often the fruits of the work, which is being open and compassionate. Perhaps whatever work we show others is us maintaining this openness through practice.

I am reminded of a moment from Toni Cade Bambara's prophetic novel *The Salt Eaters*. Before her healing, the mother healer Minnie asks Velma, "Are you sure, sweetheart, that you want to be well? . . . Just so's you're sure, sweetheart, and ready to be healed, cause wholeness is no trifling matter. A lot of weight when you're well." The weight of healing is the weight of returning to wholeness and balance and committing to staying there through consistent practice and vigilance. Being woke is the same commitment to the practice and vigilance of staying connected to our brokenheartedness and the brokenheartedness of everyone around us.

The work of real wokeness is hard, because at the end of the day, it is really about trying to care as much as you can about others. When I look at many self-proclaimed woke folks, I see them not actually caring for people as much as they are attempting to project an image of being intelligent and critical in order to gain validation and status from those in the community whom they consider gatekeepers. They are not attuned to this gritty work of hurting with others because that would mean acknowledging their own hurt.

I am not woke, but I care. This is enough for me.

Lama Rod Owens is an author, activist, formally authorized Buddhist teacher, and graduate of Harvard Divinity School. He is the co-founder of Bhumisparsha, a Tantric Buddhist practice community, as well as a co-author of *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation* and author of *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger*.

THE MAHABALI

A GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATION







Previous page: Sarvavid Vairochana Mandala; Tibet; 17th century; pigments on cloth; Rubin Museum of Art; gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin; C2006.66.346 (HAR 773)

Left: Digital approximation of the Sarvavid Vairochana Mandala in three-dimensional space, with some elements missing

A MANDALA IS AN AID FOR MEDITATION, with the main object of veneration—in this case the Buddha Vairochana—in the center. In an initiation ritual, the meditator slowly approaches the center and transforms his or her body into that of the deity.

A popular mandala in Tibetan Buddhism, the Vairochana mandala is also used for funerary rites, as the Buddha Vairochana removes the bad causes and effects generated during the deceased person's life. It is considered auspicious to commission a mandala or a set of mandalas to bless a new temple, honor a deceased high lama, or simply acquire merit.

A mandala illustrates the structure of our world, outer and inner, including the five directions, five elements (space, water, earth, fire, air), five aggregates (matter, sensation, perception, volition, consciousness), five inner negativities (ignorance, anger, pride, desire, and jealousy) and their opposites, the five wisdoms of an enlightened mind. The colors of the sections follow the symbolism outlined in the yoga tantras, with blue in the east (where the meditator enters), yellow in the south, red in the west, and green in the north.

The mandala not only shows the outer cosmic and inner psychic universe

but also reveals the path to an exalted state, to the inherent buddhahood that slumbers within every being, waiting to be discovered and awakened. The ultimate essence or unifying principle represented in the form of the central deity symbolizes this perfect world.

All painted mandalas are a blueprint of a three-dimensional reality. In this mandala, Vairochana sits on a small cube atop a larger cube, which rests on a crossed vajra. To start, one must imagine the spokes of the vajra protruding from the four sides of the cube, along with steep stairs—usually not depicted in a painted mandala—leading to the cube's platform. Here one enters the mandala palace through the east gate, which is protected by guardian deities. Inside, deities sit on two pedestals.

Resting atop the lower cube with the crystal-like walls is a second cube, which one reaches by climbing a staircase that leads to another guarded gate. After passing this gate, one stands in front of

Follow the path to connect inner and outer worlds

BY *Martin Brauen*



STEP BY STEP

Build Your Own Mandala

the sixteen great bodhisattvas who sit in a circle facing the center.

A step higher, one sees eight deities—four female and four male—who also look toward the center, where an elevated white Vairochana sits with four heads looking in the four directions. He performs the mudra, or gesture, of meditation. This pedestal of the mandala palace is also protected by a transparent wall. Each three-dimensional mandala has a roof, which is not shown in the painted version.

The whole mandala thus forms a kind of step pyramid, similar to those from Mesoamerica. It is a divine palace of jewels enclosed within a transparent bell-shaped structure. The second outermost blue ring, in which the vajras are inscribed in gold, represents this protective hood. The outermost circle of flames, shown here in gold, provides an additional layer of protection, preventing any negative influence from entering the sanctuary.

Visit RubinMuseum.org/Spiral for further reading suggestions from the author.

Martin Brauen, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist, curator, and author. From 2008 to 2011 he was chief curator at the Rubin Museum. Since his retirement he has independently curated several exhibitions, including *Bill Viola: Passions* at the Cathedral of Bern and *The Cosmos* at the Museum Rietberg, Zurich, and he recently published *A Sameness Between Us: The Friendship of Charnion von Wiegand and Piet Mondrian in Letters and Memoirs*.

STEP 1

Gather your materials. Your mandala could be two-dimensional (using paints, markers, collage, etc.) or three-dimensional (using cardboard, paper, metal, found objects, etc.). It could even be virtual if you use a computer program or app.

STEP 2

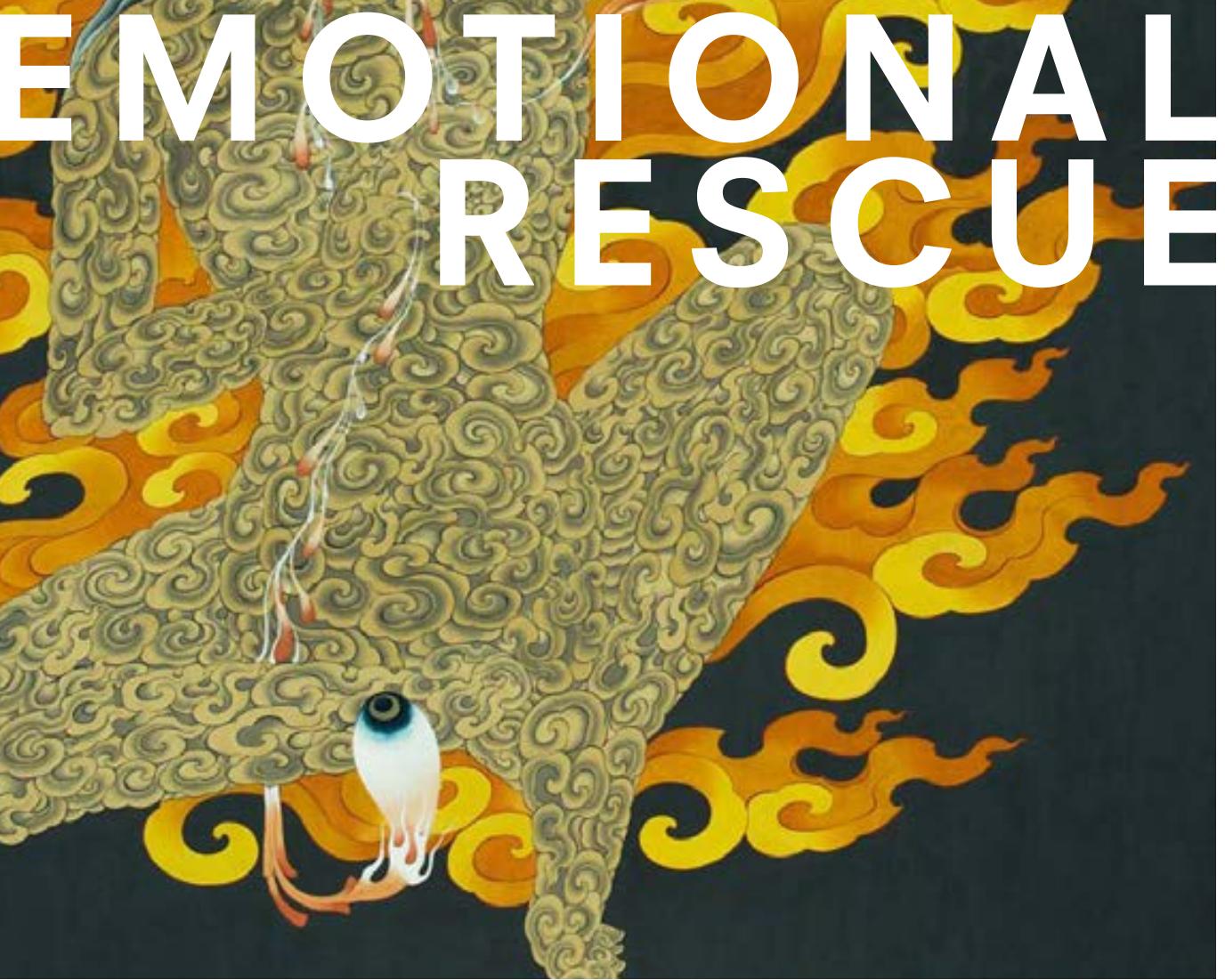
Mandalas can be all shapes—square, circular, triangular—and elevations. Determine the shapes and number of layers of your mandala to create your foundation.

STEP 3

What is most important to you? Place it in the center of the mandala. It could represent someone—Christ, Martin Luther King, Ruth Bader Ginsburg—or something you believe is essential for a peaceful future and coexistence, like a healthy environment or equal rights. You could even put in the center a person or group of people you love.

STEP 4

What are the obstacles that stand in your way on the path to your center? Tibetan mandalas have gates protected by guardians who stand in the way. How will you represent these hurdles in your mandala? Use written texts, symbols, drawings, or objects to represent your obstacles and the means to overcome them and place them at the gates of the mandala.



EMOTIONAL RESCUE

EMOTIONS THAT STAND still are not emotions. By their nature emotions are agents of change; they are meant to shift from state to state, moment to moment. Our emotions are most likely to transform, and have a transformative impact on our lives, when we engage with them, sit with them, when we become proficient in the practice of RAIN: recognize, accept, investigate, and nurture. To do so we must be awake to our internal worlds, even when emotions like anxiety, anger, and sadness are so painful. Perhaps especially when they are painful.

To be fully alive, embrace your ever-changing brain

BY *Tracy A.
Dennis-Tiwarey*

Emotions are residents of the massive, dynamic universe that is the brain. I study emotion regulation, the ability to monitor and modify the experience and expression of emotions. Crucially, regulation doesn't just mean dampen or suppress. Regulation means change. The logo of my research lab, The Emotion Regulation Lab, is a branching, tree-like circuit. It evokes not only neural networks of the brain—connections—but also metamorphosis, from several to many, from the constrained to the expansive, from the deconstruction of emotion to its transformation.

Evidence of the transformation of emotion was on full view if you walked into the Rubin Museum in 2018, where

A Monument for the Anxious and Hopeful stood in the light-filled foyer, across from the giant spiral staircase and adjacent to the exquisite sculpture of a snow lion standing guard at the elevators. The participatory art installation, created by artist Candy Chang and writer James A. Reeves, invited visitors to share their anxieties and hopes by finishing one of two sentences printed on respective cards: "I am hopeful because . . ." or "I am anxious because . . ." Visitors then placed the cards on hooks fixed to a wall divided by two colors: blue for hopes and red for anxieties.

Over the year I joined thousands of others—by the end over 55,000 cards were submitted—in contributing my hopes and anxieties to the monument. The words on the cards seemed to move together like a wave, ebbing and flowing with thoughts and ideas, changing with issues of the day, playing off each other, contradicting each other, and forming themes and variations. The cards reflected the political and the personal, immense optimism and fear:

*Racism is destroying us.
I don't know if I will find love again.
People with bad GPAs can still
be successful!
She said yes!*

It was not obvious unless you looked closely, but the juxtaposition of the two card types revealed a pattern: the anxieties and hopes were often the same. *I'm anxious because I have a job interview; I'm hopeful because I have a job interview. I'm anxious because people are fighting over politics; I'm hopeful because people are fighting over politics.* The monument showed how anxiety and hope go hand in hand. They may even be two sides of the same coin. As Chang and Reeves wrote about the installation, "Anxiety and hope are defined by a moment that has yet to arrive." Put another way, when we imagine and prepare for the uncertain future, anxiety and hope are intrinsically intertwined, forever transforming from one to another.

The fact of emotional transformation is not only beautiful but also comforting, because it resonates with our intuition that in order to be fully alive and aware—to be awake—we must accept our



Placing a hope card on *A Monument for the Anxious and Hopeful*

humanity, which is ever-changing. To a scientist like me, it is also a reminder of a fundamental lesson we learn when we observe the wondrous architecture and activities of the brain.

That lesson: there is strength in impermanence. Although in real terms, we know very little about the brain—from how it works to how consciousness emerges—one thing students of the brain know for sure is that it is an engine of change: dynamic, massively parallel, and emergent, operating at multiple timescales, from milliseconds to years, through a panoply of electrochemical, genetic, and epigenetic processes. And from this dizzying array of impermanent states emerges a powerful still point—an emotionally animated sense of a self that is enduring yet also capable of transformation.

When our children are emotionally overwrought, distressed by anxiety and strong emotions, parents and teachers the world over comfort them by describing what has always been true: emotions are not forever. Wait a moment to recognize, accept, investigate, and nurture these changing feelings. Wait a moment, and you will awaken to the inevitability of impermanence and the nourishing possibility of transforming feelings like anxiety into feelings of hope.

Tracy A. Dennis-Tiwarey, PhD, is a professor of psychology and neuroscience at The City University of New York. As director of The Emotion Regulation Lab, she conducts NIH-funded research on anxiety, suicide, and digital therapeutics for stress and anxiety. She is the co-founder of Wise Therapeutics, which translates cutting-edge science into digital tools for behavioral health, and co-executive director of the Center for Health Technology at Hunter College. She is the author of the forthcoming book *Future Tense: Making Anxiety Our Superpower*. www.dennistiwary.com



A short strange trip from chaos to enlightenment

BY Jeffrey S. Durham and John Henry Rice

SOON AFTER ENTERING THE EXHIBITION AWAKEN, you soon come face to face with an artwork that exemplifies Buddhist enlightenment. The powerful stone sculpture depicts the Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama at the instant he became a Buddha—Sanskrit for an Awakened One. More than a millennium after its creation, the sculpture still tells the enduring story of the historical Buddha's meditative transformation under the bodhi tree, whose leafy branches appear above his head.



The Buddha Triumphant over Mara; India, probably Bihar; ca. 800–900; stone; 21 ¼ x 14 ½ x 5 in. (55.2 x 36.5 x 12.7 cm); Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; The Avery Brundage Collection, B61S7+

Awaken offers more than just the opportunity to learn about enlightenment. It invites visitors to actually join a journey toward awakening. But an awakening from what? To discover what? You will see for yourself—and we don't mean that figuratively—for the transformational trek that unfolds through the galleries is facilitated by art, like many such journeys in Himalayan Buddhist traditions. You don't simply look *at* these objects, you look *into* them—and there, see yourself.

Art's role as a medium for self-examination and a catalyst for change is captured in two synonyms for Tibetan Buddhism's characteristic scroll paintings. Best known as *thangka* (rolled art), they are also described as *melong* (mirror) and *thong drol* (visual liberator). By inviting us to reflect on the relationships between ourselves and our perceptions, art can help free us from our habitual misperceptions of ourselves and reveal our true place in the world.

To see how this relationship between art and self-discovery works, let us look at—or rather into—four artworks in *Awaken*. Each depicts the Buddhist deity Vajrabhairava, the Lightning Terror. The sequence of images, like the exhibition itself, charts a course from the confusion of the ordinary world toward the clarity of the soon enlightened mind.



Tsherin Sherpa (American, b. 1968 in Nepal); *Luxation 1*; 2016; acrylic on sixteen stretched cotton canvases; each 18 x 18 in. (45.7 x 45.7 cm); Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2017.195a-p

By inviting us to reflect on the relationships between ourselves and our perceptions, art can help free us from our habitual misperceptions of ourselves and reveal our true place in the world.



Mandala of Vajrabhairava;
Ngor Monastery, Tibet;
1650–1750; colors
on cotton; image
16 ½ x 15 ¾ in.
(41.9 x 40 cm);
Asian Art Museum of
San Francisco;
The Avery Brundage
Collection, B63D5

The first of these images—in fact the very first artwork in the exhibition—is confusing indeed. Sixteen brightly painted canvases feature pieces of a larger image of Vajrabhairava, but the small gaps between them create chasms of missing information, preventing the picture from coalescing. Contemporary artist Tsherin Sherpa's *Luxation 1* reveals the chaos and fragmentation of everyday experience. We can recognize certain elements of the deity, but their sum and true significance is unclear. Like its title—meaning dislocation or displacement—suggests, the painting illustrates that our vision, particularly of ourselves, is often fractured into disjointed pieces.

Vajrabhairava is next revealed to us by a Tibetan teacher, a lama, whom we

meet in the form of a vibrant thangka painted four centuries ago. Gorampa Sonam Sengge was a fifteenth-century abbot of Ngor Monastery, and he now assumes the role of our guide in the journey toward awakening. That journey is not a physical one, but instead a meditative expedition into a set of teachings described in another painting called a mandala. Gorampa gradually leads us to the very center of this mandala where Vajrabhairava is illustrated—now fully formed but in such a minuscule scale that he is still difficult to discern.

That tiny depiction, however, soon comes into large-as-life focus. The meditative journey is not simply a study of the mandala, but instead a visualization of oneself actually traversing the world

it describes. A ring of colorful filigree is a wall of fire to be crossed; a circle of multi-hued petals defines a cosmic lotus flower to be scaled; and the large central square is a vast, multistory palace entered through gateways in the four directions. At each juncture of the journey into the mandala—and progress through the exhibition—you meet strange beings and learn, or rather experience, another piece of the mandala's teachings. The culminating encounter, and the core message of these teachings, occurs at the mandala's center, where we confront Vajrabhairava himself—transformed from that postage stamp-sized painting into a large, dramatic, intentionally terrifying three-dimensional embodiment of the thirty-four-armed buffalo-headed deity.



Vajrabhairava; Sino-Tibetan; 15th century or later; polychromed wood; 53 1/4 x 50 3/4 x 30 3/4 in. (135.3 x 128.9 x 78.1 cm); Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 93.13a-oo

Here we learn the true identity and significance of Vajrabhairava, the Lightning Terror. Known also as Yamantaka, Death Slayer, he is a wrathful manifestation of the benevolent Bodhisattva of Wisdom Manjushri. A Buddhist story—at once myth and philosophy—narrates this astonishing transformation. Once upon a time, Yama, the

Lord of Death, went on an uncontrolled rampage. To prevent Yama from devouring the entire cosmos, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom devised a clever stratagem. He turned himself into a great mirror and beckoned Yama to look at him. What Yama saw in Manjushri was Vajrabhairava: simultaneously his own mirror image and the figure of his conqueror. Buddhist Wisdom

thus defeated Death by revealing to him his true nature as impermanence embodied. In turn, when we confront this stunning image, we too gaze into a mirror exposing the reality of our mortality and reminding us that our fear of death can be conquered only through facing its inevitability.

Following this catharsis, visitors to Awaken encounter one last painting of Vajrabhairava. He is not alone but appears embracing his consort Vajravetali. His previously ink-black body, merging with hers, is transformed into radiant gold and shimmers like a mirror. Known as a *yab-yum*, or father-mother form, the pair illustrates a specific lesson: that apparent opposites, like subject and object, mind and matter, or life and death, are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually constitutive. Sufficient meditation upon such images can lead to an

The experience of nonduality
reverses the fragmentation
of our usual interactions with
the ordinary world.



Vajrabhairava and Vajravetali; Central Tibet; mid-15th century; opaque watercolor and gold on cloth; framed 46 1/4 x 38 3/4 in. (117.5 x 98.4 cm); Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Zimmerman Family Collection, Robert A. and Ruth W. Fisher Fund and Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 2010.85

experience of nonduality, the realization that an apparent object is, in truth, non-different from one's own mind.

This is the glimpse of awakening that we hope visitors to the exhibition will take away with them: that all we perceive is a product of the mind. Far from implying that nothing should be taken seriously,

it is a reminder that everything is important—every event, every being has a unique place in the infinite causal interconnections that make up the Buddhist universe. The experience of nonduality reverses the fragmentation of our usual interactions with the ordinary world and restores awareness to its proper place, not as the passive receptor of experience but as an active generator of it, capable of encompassing subject and object simultaneously and discerning unity.

The final artwork in *Awaken* is a sculpture with many similarities to the one with which we began. Both depict a Buddha, an Awakened One, but in this final image you are encouraged to see not only Buddhism's historical founder but also a reflection of your own buddha-nature. Standing before the figure—and recalling the encounter with Wisdom's mirror



Standing Crowned Buddha with Four Scenes of His Life; Bihar; southern Magadha region, India; ca. 1050–1100; basalt; 41 x 20 x 7 in. (104.1 x 50.8 x 17.8 cm); Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; The Avery Brundage Collection, B65S11

and the experience of nonduality—you are asked to consider the question, "Am I in the world, or is the world in me?" We hope you have woken to find out that the answer is simply yes, that as Grateful Dead collaborator and lyricist Robert Hunter once put it, you are the eyes of the world. ●

Jeffrey S. Durham is associate curator of Himalayan art at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. His exhibitions include *Enter the Mandala, A Guided Tour of Hell*, and *Divine Bodies*. Prior to this role, he served as professor of religion at the University of North Carolina and St. Thomas Aquinas College. As a curator and scholar, Dr. Durham focuses on the imagery and philosophy of esoteric religious traditions.

John Henry Rice is the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at Richmond's Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The breadth of the VMFA's world-class collections keeps leading him away from his core area of expertise, the arts of medieval and early modern South India. He is currently organizing a retrospective exhibition of contemporary Himalayan artist Tsherin Sherpa.

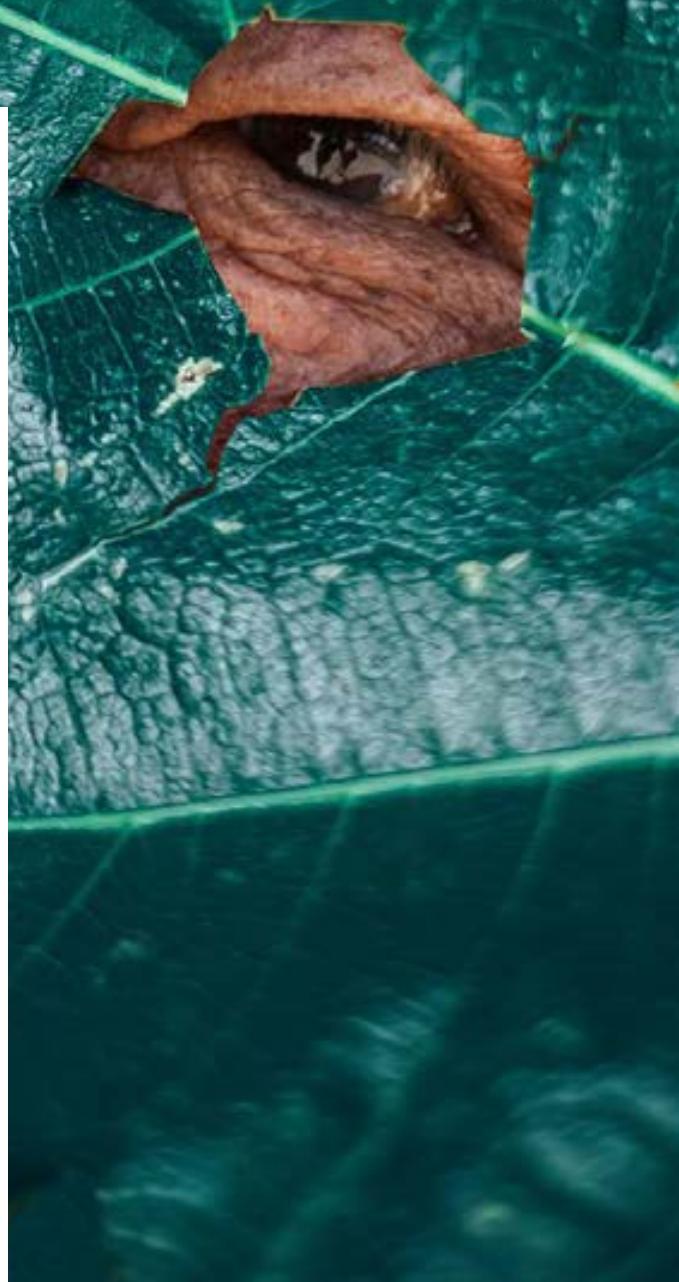
Awaken is on view at the Rubin Museum from March 12, 2020, to January 3, 2021. It was organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and also presented at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

A w a k e

BY Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

He did not want us to change the color of the ceiling to his prison cell. Remember everything, he said, the words, the meaning, and the sequence of events. We remember his story with layers. What is heard, what is meant to be heard, the meaning of the story. He maintained it was about freedom. He was put away for carrying a narrative of tradition that swayed the minds of his people. How he wandered beyond the isolation of prison cages! How heavy his tongue from tasting the body devouring its own muscles, the growing fingernails altering into talons. The sliver of sky, the grass slipping through cracks in the walls: he measured them all. The blue of remembering. Do not reorder my story, uncle said. If you mix up the order with each telling, the story will be different and the levels will change. If you change details, the meaning will shift, he said. What he meant to say was there is a way to listen. It's about turning the mind. I thought about the mind as a place where things happened. The mind was the thing that had been ripening, like a lotus in mud, he would say, making us work to fulfill his analogy. Making plans for the future in prison was like using a spoon to dig into an iron bed, he would say. Freedom was always his to use, the mind, his. Liberation. I was not present when he parted from his mind. He took nothing, as predicted. I am careful with the layers, my hands now accustomed to constant wringing and washing in my quarantine. The morning sun draws out the vascular system of plants on the windowsill, I follow the ridges of serrated veins and consider how little I know of longitude and latitude. He'd say to start from the center. To turn the mind to mind. ●

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa was born in India and raised in India and Nepal. She is the author of the poetry books *My Rice Tastes like the Lake*, *In the Absent Everyday*, and *Rules of the House*, all from Apogee Press, Berkeley. Dhompa's first nonfiction book, *Coming Home to Tibet*, was published by Penguin in India and Shambhala Publications in the United States. She teaches in the English Department at Villanova University.





STEP BY STEP

Write a Poem

By Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

Living in the time of a global pandemic means meeting the familiar in slightly new ways. For some of us our home is now a playground, school, office, and park. Follow this prompt to write a poem on the ordinary objects around you in your home. Focusing on the seemingly ordinary might awaken you to something unexpected.

Each step indicates one or more lines. Have fun with line breaks.

STEP 1

Pick an object you use or see every day. Describe it using concrete images. Make the reader see it, smell it, or feel it.

STEP 2

How is the object described or defined in the dictionary? Or what terms do advertisers use to promote it? Borrow words and phrases from these sources.

STEP 3

Ask a question (philosophical, practical, emotional) that you've been trying to voice or answer or one that someone asked you recently.

STEP 4

Using a metaphor describe something you see outside your window, like a tree or an electric pole.

STEP 5

Is there a story related to the object? For instance, maybe the tree was planted when a family member was born. Give one fact from the story.

STEP 6

Write a sentence that attempts to answer the question you posed in step 3 or at least gestures toward it.

Life Is But a Dream



(As Seen on TV)

Tuning in to films and series that play with the nature of reality can help us channel Buddhist wisdom

BY *Katy Brennan*

DURING THE PANDEMIC, some of us have had a lot more time to meditate . . . and to watch Netflix, or any of the seemingly endless streaming options offering more content than we can possibly consume in a lifetime.

When we meditate, we're tuning in to the true nature of our mind.

But when we pick up the remote, are we just tuning out, lazily falling deeper into what Buddha called the sleep of samsara? Or can we use our viewing time to tune in to the true nature of reality?

That may depend on both what we're watching and how we're watching it.

Some films and series are particularly fun to play with on a spiritual level because they, themselves, play with the nature of reality, perception, conception, dreams, and what it means to wake up.

The most seen film in movie history offers a perfect example. When Dorothy wakes up back in Kansas, she protests that her time in Oz wasn't a dream, yet no one seems to believe her. We do. We've been there and seen it in all its Technicolor glory. On some level, we've assented to that reality, as we do when we enjoy any film, however fantastical. It's the same way that we assent to the realities of a dream as we're dreaming.

"This was a real, truly live place. And I remember that some of it wasn't very nice. But most of it was beautiful. But just the

same, all I kept saying to everybody was, 'I want to go home.' And they sent me home," Dorothy says in the final scene. "Home! And this is my room—and you're all here! And I'm not going to leave here ever, ever again, because I love you all!"

If you pause there, before the well-known final line ("There's no place like home!"), you realize that Dorothy has had something of a deeper awakening, in the Buddhist sense, to the true, extraordinary, blissful nature of what she previously experienced as a rather dull, boring, ordinary life.

In the Mahayana Buddhist scripture *Training the Mind in Seven Points*, the great Tibetan bodhisattva Geshe Chekhawa (1102–1176) says, "Think that all phenomena are like dreams."

By thinking this way, Buddhist practitioners become more familiar with the true nature of reality and move closer toward spiritual awakening.

As played by Bill Murray in 1993's *Groundhog Day*, TV weatherman Phil Connors experiences an awakening similar to Dorothy's, only he experiences it several dozen times, over and over, until he gets it right. Like Dorothy, Phil is initially feeling

down, uninspired by his surroundings and his circumstances. Through the course of the film, he experiences dream-like loops, reliving February 2nd over and over, experiencing it differently depending on his own actions and perceptions. Through the transformative power of love and wisdom, he comes to realize that he can use his knowledge of the loops to change himself and others. He saves people from deadly accidents and misfortunes and ultimately makes a meaningful connection with his love interest, freeing himself from the loops—in essence, waking up from a transformative dream.

What Phil realizes is what Buddhist practitioners, with practice, come to realize: when we change our mind, we change our world. Why? Because our world is created by our mind.

With our present (unenlightened) waking minds, we experience phenomena as existing independently, outside of our mind. In truth, everything we experience depends upon the mind perceiving—we might even say *conceiving*—it.

The same is true of the relationship between our dreaming minds and dream

When we're dreaming, even the strangest things appear very real to us.

reality. When we're dreaming, even the strangest things appear very real to us. Only when we wake do we understand that our dream appearances were "just a dream" created by our dreaming mind.

Buddha's teachings ask us to live as if we are in a lucid dream, understanding that our minds are creating our reality.

Richard Linklater's 2001 film *Waking Life* takes an overtly profound look at the power of lucid dreaming, the nature of consciousness, reality, free will, existentialism, and the meaning of life. Using surreal rotoscoped digital video of live actors, the film follows the journey of a young man through a succession of dream-like realities where he encounters a series of individuals who engage in philosophical discussions and presentations. Only gradually does he begin to realize that he is living out a perpetual dream. Like a dream alluding to the past, the film references Linklater's previous films *Slacker* (1991) and *Before Sunrise* (1995) and includes a cameo by the filmmaker himself. Though Linklater's character offers the neat conclusion that dreams offer a glimpse into the infinite nature of reality, there are multiple (one might say infinite) conclusions to be reached.



In a more contemporary take on life as a lucid dream, Netflix's 2019 series *Russian Doll* presents another colorful and surreal, though totally live action, take on the revelatory power of the dream loop. Like Bill Murray's Phil, Natasha Lyon's Nadia struggles to escape repeating the same day (in this case, her thirty-sixth birthday) until she begins to more closely investigate the nature of her experience and discovers its transformative potential. Along the way, we're invited to contemplate ideas like rebirth, interdependence, the dependent-related nature of reality, and even parallel universes.

Midnight Gospel, another recent Netflix original, is much more overtly Buddhist in orientation. This adult animated series created by Pendleton Ward and Duncan Trussell directly asks us to consider the implications of Buddhist philosophy in a series of dream-like encounters in trippy parallel universes. The crudely rendered Clancy comically and profoundly confuses Buddhist teachings as an excuse to, essentially, space out. His misadventures in the multiverse yield profound and illuminating realizations, largely via audio taken from *The Duncan Trussell Family Hour* podcast interviews with thinkers like addiction specialist Dr. Drew Pinsky, writer Anne Lamott, and Buddhist teacher David Nichtern. Anyone with an interest in meditation, or an experience with hallucinogens, will immediately find something of interest in these episodes, not to mention anyone who has experienced grief or questioned the meaning of loss and life.

Each episode of *Midnight Gospel* evokes a trip into deeper levels of consciousness. When we fully absorb into meditation, as when we dream, we're engaging with our subtle consciousness. But in meditation, because we are actively cultivating wisdom—and other good qual-

ities like love and compassion—we're not going to sleep; we're actually in the process of waking up to our fullest potential: to become a Buddha, an enlightened being, one who is fully awake.

When we sleep, our minds are not focused or directed. We let the dreaming mind produce what it will and wake up with that sense, "I've just had the strangest dream."

It's akin to having watched a decidedly odd, provocative film, like Charlie Kaufman's latest psychological thriller, *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*. What feels, at first, like a love story gone wrong ends up offering a surrealistic exploration of the nature of time and reality that, much as a dream might, touches on the kind of gauzy impressions left by poetry, art, music, theater, and film on our subtle consciousness. As in a particularly bizarre, vivid dream, the protagonist experiences an unexpected interplay between identity and perspective and among the past, present, and future.

Like a Buddhist teacher, all of these works seem to be telling us "you're in a dream." In fact, any film, series, or book—truly anything that appears to our minds—can be experienced as a training in the nature of reality, perhaps bringing us closer to truly waking up. ☀

Katy Brennan is a writer, author, and Buddhist meditation teacher in New York City.



STEP BY STEP

Cook Farsi Tarkari

By Dawa Bhuti



In Nepal and India, pumpkin is never sweetened and served as a dessert like pie. It's always spiced up and prepared as a savory dish. Farsi tarkari can best be described as a pumpkin stew. It originates from the Jyapu agricultural caste of the Newari people in the Kathmandu Valley. The mode of preparation differs among households, depending on the availability of ingredients. Its fragrant combination of flavors and nutrients not only awakens the senses but boosts the immune system, leaving you with a clean, alert feeling.

Farsi Tarkari

Serves 4–5

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 tbsp any oil (except flavored oil or olive oil)
- 1 tbsp fresh minced ginger
- 1 tbsp fresh minced garlic
- 1½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp Sichuan pepper
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper (or paprika for a non-spicy substitute)
- 6 cups bite-size cut pumpkin (half a small pumpkin—ideally kabocha or buttercup pumpkin; if you use another kind you may need to adjust the water amount and cooking time)
- 4 cups water
- 10–12 sprigs of fresh chives (traditionally we use zimbu wild dried chives)



STEP 1

In a medium heavy saucepan gradually bring 6 tbsp oil to medium heat, then add ginger and garlic. Sauté until light golden brown. Add the pumpkin and sauté for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the spices and salt and sauté at medium heat until the spices nicely coat the pumpkin (3 to 5 minutes). Add water and let it simmer for 15 minutes.

STEP 2

Beat the fresh chives with the side of a knife to extract the juice from the chives, which will later create a nice flavor and fragrant smell, then cut chives into 1-inch pieces. In a separate small saucepan heat the remaining 2 tbsp oil until very hot, then toss in the beaten,

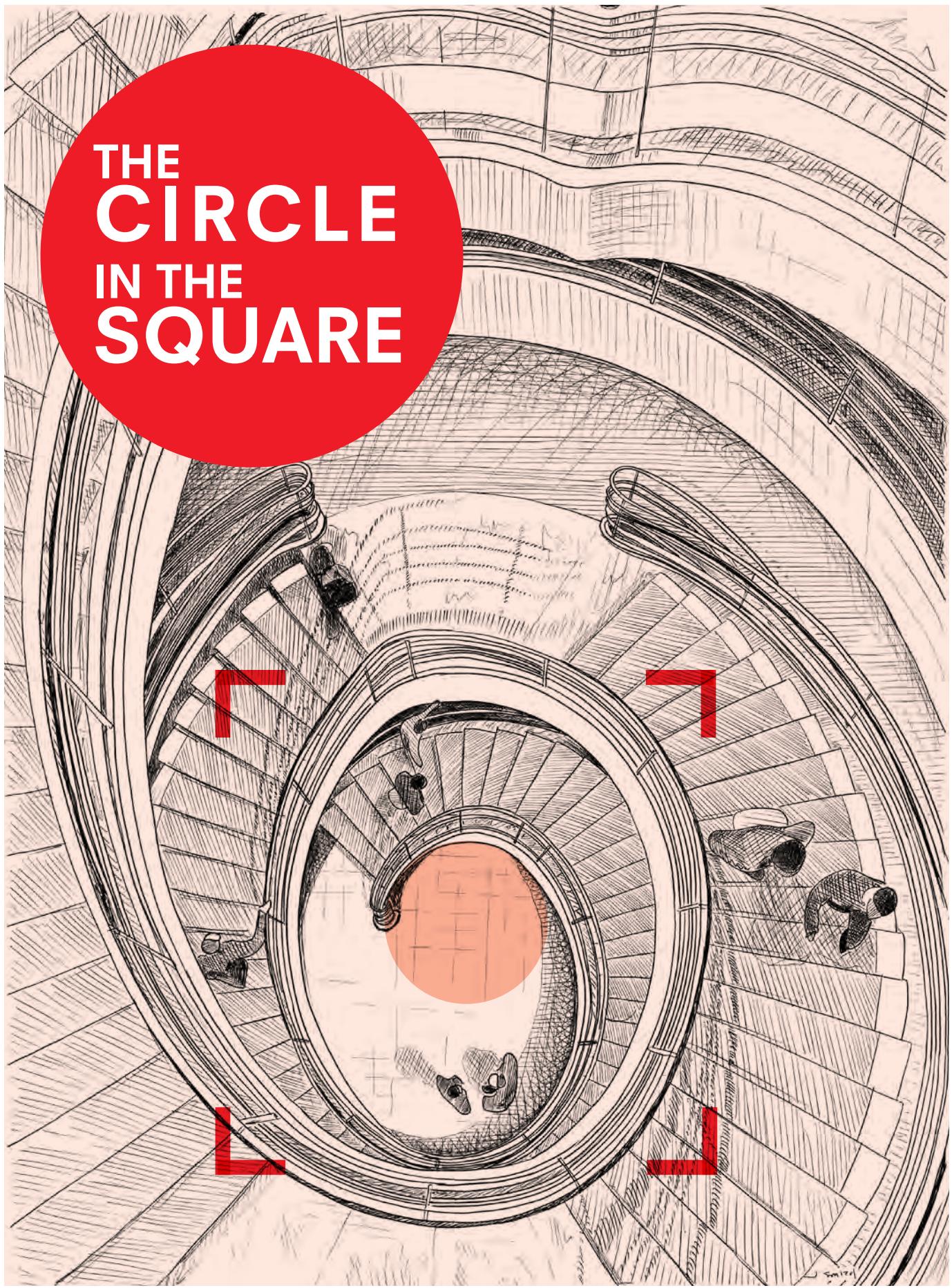
cut chives. Quickly stir and then pour the oil and chive mixture over the stew. This toasting step should be done within 10 seconds.

STEP 3

Adjust the spice and salt seasoning to your preference. Enjoy as is or serve with rice or bread.

Dawa Bhuti is the chef and co-owner of Dawa's restaurant in Queens. Her family is originally from Tibet, and she was born in Nepal and grew up in Tibetan refugee boarding schools in India. In school and college she learned about different cultures and cuisines. She realized that many cultures share the same concept of a dish but prepare it differently according to the availability of ingredients and local traditions. In this sense food creates familiarity and unites us.

THE CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE



How the Mandala Lab builds on the Rubin Museum of Art's storied architecture

BY *Howard Kaplan*

How It Began

In 1998, when Shelley and Donald Rubin first walked through the empty Barneys building that would become the site of their future museum, the structure was in disrepair. “The building was falling apart, filthy, cold, and unattractive,” Donald Rubin told me, “There were broken fixtures and trash everywhere.” A couple of weeks later they returned and walked the André Putnam–designed marble staircase six floors to the top. Something clicked. As Shelley and Donald recall, “We talked about how the staircase could be incorporated into the design, and how the museum could represent a journey, from floor to floor, moving not only through the history and meaning of Himalayan—primarily Tibetan—art, but upward toward the spirit of human enlightenment that inspired the art. We thought that the museum could be a journey that might reflect a spiritual experience, as it is in temples all over the Himalayas.”

From Barneys to Buddha

The Rubins realized that not only was the staircase iconic but its spiral shape and the way it articulated the circular space surrounded by quadrants on each floor was reminiscent of a mandala. The staircase also rises in the east, which is how you approach a sacred site and circumambulate in a clockwise direction.

A mandala—Sanskrit for “sacred center”—is a cosmological diagram used by Buddhist practitioners as they seek

enlightenment. They are sacred abodes of gods and deities with a particular deity at the center. A mandala can take the form of a painting on cloth, an impermanent creation made of colored sand, or a large three-dimensional structure. In Tantric Buddhism the mandala is used for *yidam* practice where practitioners visualize themselves as an enlightened being in hopes of adopting their qualities. This visualization helps to transform our everyday emotions into those of enlightened beings.

Designer Milton Glaser created the Museum’s original graphic and brand identity using the circle and square motif of the mandala in his designs. The mandala also makes an appearance in a subtle detail at the Rubin entrance. Designed by architect Erich Theophile, each bronze door handle contains a sacred Buddhist symbol surrounded by a mandala.

Inner and Outer Worlds

Though the design of the mandala is in the very DNA of the Museum, the Mandala Lab, debuting in August 2021, will take the idea of the sacred diagram to the next level. The innovative project will transform the third floor and mark the first time the Museum is using the shape of the building to invoke the palace floor plan of a mandala itself.

Combining art, cognitive science, and contemplative practice, the Mandala Lab takes the seventeenth-century Sarvavid Vairochana Mandala from the Rubin collection and Buddhist teachings as

inspiration for experiences of social and emotional learning. According to Tim McHenry, deputy executive director and chief programmatic officer at the Rubin, “We identified what was needed to translate the teachings into twenty-first-century terms, then came up with exercises to make those teachings real.”

Brooklyn-based architectural team PRO, led by founding architects Miriam Peterson and Nathan Rich, are re-envisioning the space, which will also house the Museum’s education center. As Rich told me, “We’ve always thought about architecture’s ability to ground people in place and in the moment, and the Mandala Lab has been a great challenge and opportunity.” With that in mind, PRO set out to create an experience on the third floor that was different from the rest of the Museum yet “still preserved some of the concepts and even the literal interpretations of the mandala.”

While the moodier lighting on the other gallery floors was designed for solo visitors or small groups to contemplate works of art, the Mandala Lab is about collective experience and will be illuminated by additional light sources. During the day, bright light drawn from the oculus above will let you see right through a fine metal mesh scrim installed around the stairs, while in the evening the scrim will become more opaque. “The liminal quality of light was something that we felt also evokes the ideas of the mandala,” Peterson says.

The Mandala Lab will be defined in many ways by its openness, the ability to see each aspect of the experience



Gallery rendering
© Peterson Rich Office /
The Rubin Museum of Art

from wherever you are. "We wanted it to be clear that you're not in the traditional gallery space," Senior Manager of Exhibition Design Brianne Muscente-Solga told me. "We're blowing out the structure, including the walls that are in that space, to give you a clear vista to the various points of the gallery. You're not seeing things in piecemeal; you're soaking it in all at once."

The Journey Unfolds

Ponlop Rinpoche, a Buddhist teacher and an advisor to the project, explains that each section of the Mandala Lab "offers rich methods of transmuting or transforming emotions or mental afflictions into wisdoms." The journey begins in the south quadrant. Here you'll recognize which part of pride concerns you at the moment—arrogance, complacency, low

self-esteem—then check it as if it were a wet umbrella and you had just entered the Museum.

Next you step into the west, where you'll convert attachment into a wisdom that may ultimately resemble empathy—all by following your nose. This quadrant is structured as a scent library. Open one of the "books" and you'll be greeted by a puff of scent and asked to relate the smell to a feeling or emotion. On view will also be artist-created videos illustrating memorable olfactory experiences. Laurie Anderson, for instance, recalls the smell of cigarette smoke and recounts what memory that scent triggers for her.

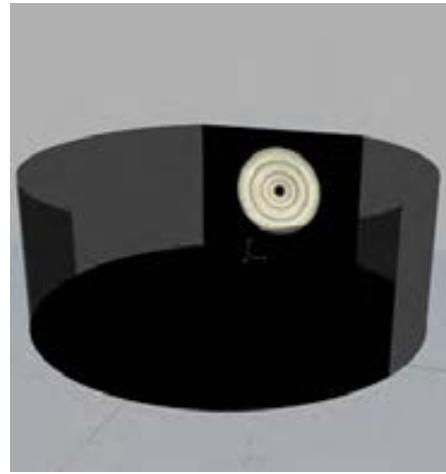
When you move on to the north, you'll encounter a set of glowing circular shapes created by Tibetan American artist Palden Weinreb. Here a meditation exercise based on breathing will help transform jealousy into a sense of common accomplishment. Rich and Peterson are creating a rounded space for the experience so people can face both the light installation and one another. This section of the Mandala Lab will be lined with acoustic insulation to absorb noise, making the space sound, look, and feel different. Sound won't move around as much, creating a dampening quality to the walls. As Rich says, "This will enhance the feeling of being present and focused in that collective breathing experience."

The journey continues in the east quadrant, where you're invited to convert anger or hatred into wisdom with the help of Indian American percussionist Drums Shivamani and eight gongs, designed

by different artists, suspended above a small pool of water. Hit the gong, immerse it in water, then use patience to see your reflection untrammeled.

Then remember when you first entered the Mandala Lab and checked an element of pride? It's time to retrieve it and check in on the other three emotional states you've explored: attachment, jealousy, and anger. Like the wet umbrella you may have checked at the door, hopefully they have changed a bit, maybe dried out. You have followed the path of the mandala, turning pride into equanimity, emotions into wisdoms. As you leave you'll receive a mantra. Hold on to it and refer to it when you feel as if your umbrella is getting wet again.

Now you're ready to step out onto the landing and enter the core of the mandala. You can't step into it literally, because it's a vacuum made by the spiral staircase. But you're entering the world where the teachings need to be applied. As McHenry told me, "It's an open-ended question: How long will the calibrations last, and where will these teachings take you on your ongoing path to the center?"



Artist Palden Weinreb's rendering of the north quadrant of the Mandala Lab

The Mandala Lab will open at the Rubin Museum in August 2021.

Howard Kaplan is an editor and writer who helped found *Spiral* magazine in 2017. He currently works at the Smithsonian and divides his time between Washington, DC, and New York City.

About the Museum

The Rubin Museum of Art

WHERE CONTEMPORARY MINDS MEET THE ART AND WISDOM OF THE HIMALAYAS

The Rubin Museum of Art in Chelsea, New York City, explores and celebrates the diversity and uniqueness of Himalayan art, ideas, and cultures across history and into the present. With its globally renowned collection, largely centered around the Tibetan Plateau, the Rubin fosters understanding and appreciation of this region by relating its art and ideas to our shared human experience today. Inspired by the philosophical traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism and aligned with ongoing research into learning, behavior, and the brain, the Rubin offers innovative exhibitions and programs that examine provocative ideas across the arts and explore the mind. Through this work, the Museum serves as a space for reflection and personal transformation, opening windows to inner worlds so visitors can better navigate outer ones.

MUSEUM HOURS

Monday CLOSED
Tuesday CLOSED
Wednesday CLOSED
Thursday* 11:00 AM–5:00 PM
Friday* 11:00 AM–10:00 PM
Saturday 11:00 AM–5:00 PM
Sunday 11:00 AM–5:00 PM

*Senior and high-risk hours are every Thursday from 10:00–11:00 AM

*Free admission every Friday from 6:00–10:00 PM

VISIT

The Rubin Museum of Art | 150 West 17th Street
New York, NY



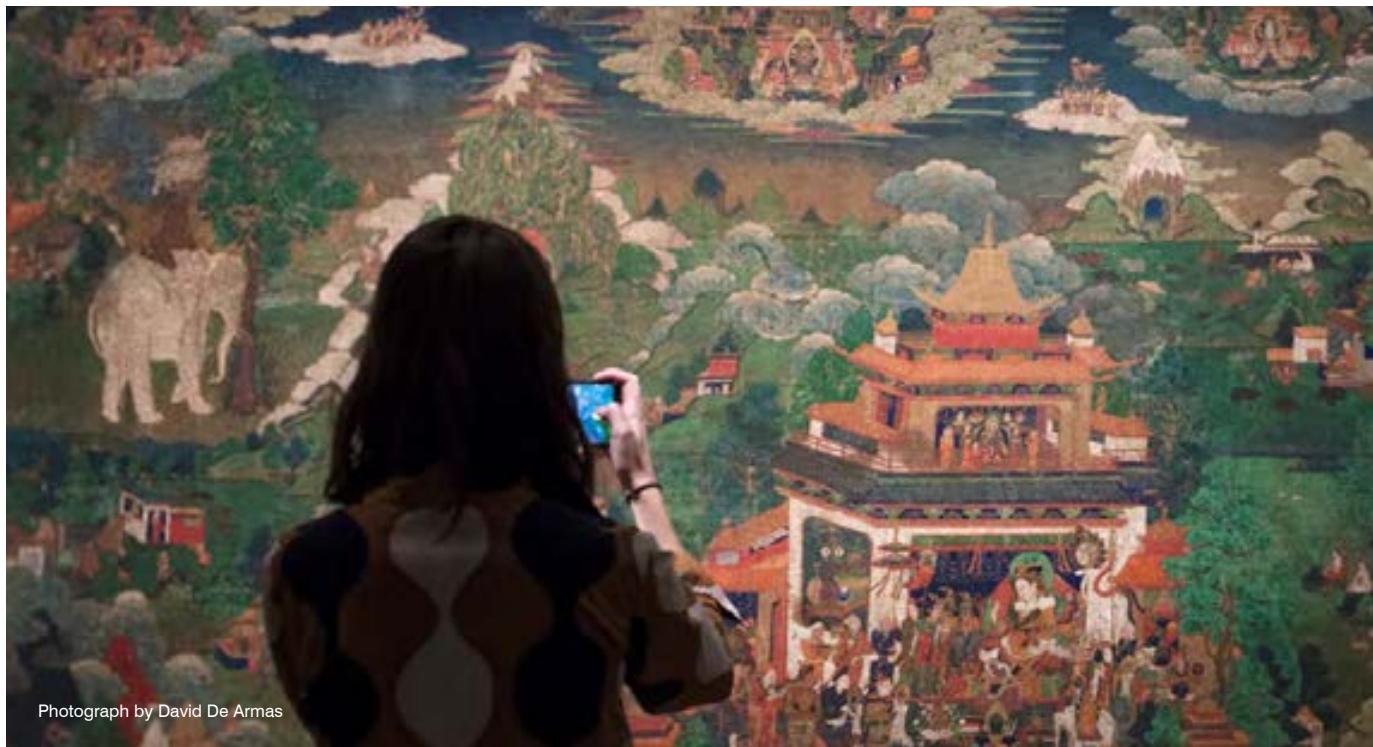
CONNECT WITH US

Explore the collection, attend an online program, and receive the latest updates on our exhibitions and event listings!

- Visit us online at RubinMuseum.org
- Join our email list at RubinMuseum.org/ENews
- Follow us on social media @RubinMuseum
- Download the free Rubin app and enjoy audio content for many works from our collection in the palm of your hand

Exhibitions

Through the lens of Himalayan art, we journey with all who are curious to explore our shared human experience and consciously and insightfully navigate the complexities of our world today.



Photograph by David De Armas

Gateway to Himalayan Art

Start here for an introduction to the rich artistic traditions of the region, illuminating the primary figures, symbols, materials, techniques, and original functions of the objects presented throughout the Museum.

Masterworks: A Journey through Himalayan Art

Journey across geography and more than a thousand years of history, tracing artistically and historically significant works from the Rubin's collection, including new acquisitions and gifts, as well as select loans of exceptional quality.

The Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room

Step into the Shrine Room for a moment of contemplation, beauty, or wonder. An ongoing focal point of the Rubin Museum and a visitor favorite, this immersive installation features art from the collection and is inspired by traditional shrines.

Shrine Room Projects

In dialogue with the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room at the center of the gallery, contemporary artists reinterpret traditional and religious iconography and practices through sculptural installation, painting, and video.

Charged with Buddha's Blessings: Relics from an Ancient Stupa

Through May 30, 2021

This installation tells the remarkable story of the discovery of an ancient stupa site in northern India. It contained five intact reliquaries, one of which had an inscription claiming it included the remains of the Buddha. On display are the offerings of gems and gold-foil ornaments that were enshrined with the reliquaries.

Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment

March 12, 2021–January 3, 2022

Unplug and discover the possibility to free the mind. *Awaken* guides visitors on a journey toward enlightenment, showcasing the power of Tibetan Buddhist art to focus and refine awareness, and highlighting the inextricable relationship between artistic endeavor and spiritual practice in Tibetan Buddhism. Organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, this traveling exhibition has been re-imagined and adapted for the Rubin Museum's galleries and features thirty-five traditional objects, including fourteen from the Rubin Museum's collection, with two contemporary works by Tsherin Sherpa.

Programs

The Rubin presents an array of thematic public programs, from dialogues on mind science to art-making workshops for families, that dive deeper into the art and ideas of Himalayan art. In 2021 many of our programs take place online and are free or pay what you wish. Please check RubinMuseum.org/events for updates.

Brainwave

April–May 2021

Our longest running talk series investigates how our minds shape our everyday experiences by combining the most compelling advancements in science with traditional Himalayan wisdom. This year join us online and explore the Buddhist idea of sati, or awareness, through the lens of neuroscience and psychology, uncovering tools to reconnect to ourselves and our communities during challenging times.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mondays, 1:00–1:45 PM

Practice the art of attention in this forty-five-minute

program for beginners and skilled meditators alike. Each session is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum's collection and includes an opening talk, a twenty-minute sitting session led by an expert teacher, and a closing discussion. Listen to past programs on our Mindfulness Meditation podcast using your favorite podcast app.

Mindful Connections

For Visitors with Dementia and Their Caregivers

Every month trained guides facilitate an online experience designed to promote engagement with works of art and other participants.

Himalayan Heritage

Rubin Museum educator and Himalayan region expert Tashi Chodron hosts a monthly program that explores the cultures, art, history, and sacred traditions of the Himalayan region through discussions, performances, and meetings with guest speakers.

Family Sundays

Sundays, 1:00–2:00 PM

Join us every first Sunday of the month for an afternoon of mindful activities both kids and grown-ups will enjoy. Recommended for ages 3 and older with accompanying adults.

Empowering Caregivers

Designed specifically for caregivers, this program invites participants to examine the power dynamics in their lives and open their minds to a different understanding of their own agency.

Block Party

Every year the Museum hosts a community Block Party for kids and adults alike. Thousands of New Yorkers come for art, food, and activities inspired by the collection and the Himalayan region.

For current listings, visit RubinMuseum.org/events. All programs subject to change.

More Than a Museum

We mix arts and culture with a social experience. In addition to our exhibitions and programs, discover unique items from our shop, or make the Rubin the lively venue for your next private in-person or online event.

Private Events and Rentals

Whether you're planning a virtual event or need to make a professional conference more inspiring, consider the Rubin Museum for your private event or rental needs. Our expert events team makes it easy to plan,

with a range of wellness experiences, happy hour packages, art workshops, and family-friendly experiences that can be customized for an in-person, virtual, or hybrid event. Learn more at RubinMuseum.org/space-rentals.

The Shop

Take a memory of the Museum home with you or give a gift from the Rubin! The shop's selection of jewelry, artisan items, books, and other treasures feature an array of unique items, many unavailable anywhere

else. All proceeds from the shop support the Rubin Museum of Art, and items can be purchased in store or online at RubinMuseum.org. Members receive a 10% discount on all purchases.

You Make It Possible

The Rubin Museum is only as strong as our supporters. You help us create a space for contemplation, learning, inspiration, community, and art. Join us! Visit RubinMuseum.org/support to learn more.

Become a member or give the gift of membership

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Membership to the Rubin Museum of Art is also a special gift that friends and family of all ages can enjoy throughout the year.

Make a donation

Your support helps make art and timeless wisdom come alive for thousands of people each year.

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Spiral asks big questions at the center of our shared human experience: life and death, connection to one another and our world, identity, states of consciousness, the cosmos, and the nature of existence. The Art of Awakening issue offers provocative perspectives on the concept of awakening in relation to Buddhism, pop culture, science, and more.

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